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What Counts as Happiness for Young People in the
Second Decade of the 21st Century? An Exploration

A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Empirical research on adults' happiness is growing. However, research on children's and young people's happiness is limited, and has been dominated by adult-led, quantitative studies that emphasise measuring happiness for social comparison and indicators of progress. However, such approaches assume that happiness is the same for everyone, and do not allow for children's own perspectives of happiness. My PhD thesis has provided a critical new insight into young people's happiness, using a qualitative approach to allow young people to explore aspects of what happiness means for them. Data was collected in three phases with 42 young people aged 13-16 from a large, multicultural school in South Central England. I devised a new method of "happiness maps", inviting young people to consider what aspects of their lives they associated with happiness, plotting these on their happiness maps within a series of concentric circles designed to indicate their relative significance. Family members, friends, music, food, sport and pets were the most frequently mentioned aspects within a wide and varied conceptualisation of happiness. However, relationships with family and friends contributed to young people's happiness and unhappiness. Follow-up discussion groups and individual interviews further explored the meanings the young people attached to happiness, how important happiness was to them, and how they understood how their happiness changed over time. I analysed the data using broad principles of constructivist grounded theory. New findings from my study revealed that happiness was individually variable, complex, and needs to be understood within the context of young people's lives. Discussion of happiness encompassed unhappiness, which is absent from many existing models. Young people indicated that they felt under pressure to be happy. Importantly, in

some cases, the pressure to be happy resulted in pretending to be happy to assuage the concerns of others, despite considerable emotional cost to themselves.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: DEFINITIONS, MODELS AND CRITIQUES.....	7
2.1 INTRODUCTION	7
2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL DEFINITIONS OF HAPPINESS INFORMING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH.....	7
2.3 MODELS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)	8
CHAPTER 3: CHILDREN’S HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING	22
3.1 INTRODUCTION	22
3.2 KEY REPORTS ON HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING.....	23
3.3 REVIEW OF STUDIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS	43
3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY	56
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY.....	58
4.1 INTRODUCTION	58
4.2 DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	58
4.3 SITUATING THE STUDY	61
4.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN	63
4.5 DATA COLLECTION.....	66
4.6 DATA ANALYSIS.....	81
4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY	98
CHAPTER 5: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND HAPPINESS.....	100
5.1 INTRODUCTION	100
5.2 QUANTITATIVE & PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS ON FAMILY, FRIENDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS FROM THE HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRES	100
5.3 FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS.....	105
5.4 FRIENDSHIPS AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS.....	127
5.5 OVERALL FINDINGS ON FAMILY, FRIENDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS	140
CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES OF HAPPINESS.....	142
6.1 INTRODUCTION	142
6.2 MUSIC AND HAPPINESS.....	143
Personally identifying with the songs of bands; finding personal meaning in songs...	144
Feeling that music helps them.....	145
Music being motivational.....	145
Liking band members and feeling appreciated by them	145

Music being an interest and providing enjoyment	145
Complex and contingent nature of music and happiness:	145
6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY	155
CHAPTER 7: NARRATIVES OF HAPPINESS.....	157
7.1 INTRODUCTION	157
7.2 PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN HAPPINESS OVER TIME.....	157
7.3 NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCING HAPPINESS.....	160
7.4 SUMMARY	175
CHAPTER 8: FEELINGS AND SUBJECTIVITIES	178
8.1 INTRODUCTION	178
8.2 CHOICES, TRAJECTORIES AND HAPPINESS.....	178
8.3 THE MEANINGS AND IMPORTANCE OF HAPPINESS TO YOUNG PEOPLE	190
8.4 PRETENDING TO BE HAPPY.....	198
8.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY	205
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION.....	206
9.1 INTRODUCTION	206
9.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	206
9.3 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MY STUDY.....	217
9.4 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	220
APPENDIX I: THE HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE	223
APPENDIX II: ANALYTIC MEMO ON MUSIC AND HAPPINESS.....	229
APPENDIX III: ANALYSING INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES.....	238
APPENDIX IV: EXCERPT FROM FIELD NOTES	240
APPENDIX V: SELF-REFLEXIVITY IN DATA COLLECTION: RECALLING MY OWN EMOTIONS..	243
REFERENCES	245

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Summary of the Key Findings of the *Good Childhood Reports* 2012-2017 pgs. 29-31

Table 2: Participant Sample Information pgs. 70-71

Figure 1: Structure of Diener's (1984) SWB model, based on the experience of wellbeing p.11

Figure 2: Model of Children's Well-being used in the *Good Childhood Reports* from 2013-2017 p.33

Figure 3: Example of a Completed Happiness Map p.75

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In November 2010, David Cameron, then the Prime Minister of Britain's new coalition government, gave a speech about well-being, framing it as an indicator of progress and inviting the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to devise a new way of measuring it. In this speech, the Prime Minister acknowledged the previous dominance of economic measures (e.g. Gross Domestic Product, or GDP) as indicators of well-being, but argued that a shift towards improving people's lives was needed: "Growth is the essential foundation of all our aspirations but...GDP is an incomplete way of measuring a country's progress" (Cameron, 2010). He suggested that utilising non-economic measures of well-being was fundamental to the role of Britain's government: "Finding out what will really improve lives and acting on it is actually the serious business of government" (Cameron, 2010).

The ONS subsequently embarked on the *National Wellbeing Project*, leading to the development of the *Measures of National Wellbeing* (MNW), and annual population surveys of life satisfaction and happiness. From 2014, the ONS included assessments of children's well-being, using measurements developed in conjunction with the Children's Society (as used in their own *Good Childhood Reports*, discussed in Chapter 3). The growing momentum towards finding out "what works" in improving well-being can be seen in the establishment of the research organisation *What Works Centre for Wellbeing* (www.whatworkswellbeing.org) in 2015. This organisation is concerned with sharing evidence that governments, businesses and others can use to improve well-being. Its evidence programmes are commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council, with a clear emphasis on measuring well-being to assess social progress.

The UK is not alone in this quest to find and measure determinants of well-being and happiness, and to assess their progress. Monitoring happiness is now an international concern, generating comparative reports on participating countries' national happiness and well-being. Key findings of these reports are regularly headlined in the UK media. For example, on 20th March 2017, (World Happiness Day), the 2017 World Happiness Report was released, prompting the following headline: "Happiness report: Norway is the happiest place on Earth" (BBC News, 2017). This report is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Another recent newspaper headline was based on ONS findings that life satisfaction ratings have risen 0.3 points in the last year to 7.51 out of 10. This was summarised in the Sunday Times as follows: "Wellbeing report: Life looks rosy to most living in the UK" (Hurst, 2017).

There are also frequently headlines about children's happiness emanating from research reports, even those that have been published several years earlier. For example, international ratings of children's well-being across various categories published in 2013 placed Holland top of 29 rich industrialised countries (The UK was 16th) (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013). This prompted a 2017 headline from *The Telegraph* about raising children according to Dutch parenting principles, "They raise the world's happiest children - so is it time you went Dutch?" (Acosta & Hutchison, 2017). The annual *Good Childhood Report* published each August by The Children's Society also generates timely headlines on children's happiness and wellbeing in the UK. Following this year's report, the Guardian reported that, "Study shows millions of children in the UK are worried about crime" (Marsh, 2017). The *Good Childhood Report 2017* and subsequent media headlines highlight the decline in children's happiness in the UK, now at its lowest since 2010, the year that David Cameron announced that improving the nation's well-being was a key priority for the government.

There was, however, another part of David Cameron's 2010 well-being speech that warrants attention. Whilst in announcing the new measures of well-being, he recognised that: "a new measure won't give the full story of our nation's well-being, or happiness or contentment" (Cameron, 2010), a measurement-driven approach nevertheless became firmly established. This is perhaps not surprising given the similar focus of academic research on happiness (or subjective well-being, terms often used interchangeably in the literature).

This focus on finding and measuring determinants of well-being as the mainstay of happiness research has occurred over the last 30 years despite calls from some prominent researchers who have argued that there is a need for happiness research to take into consideration people's life experiences. For example, Diener (1984), whilst developing his model of subjective well-being (see Chapter 2), acknowledged that emotional experiences are part of everyday life, and that happiness has lots of different meanings in everyday discourse. Ryff (1989), who developed a psychological model of well-being (see Chapter 2), also argued that happiness research should account for life experiences. They underline the problems of a measurement-based approach.

However, most subsequent research on subjective well-being and happiness has not considered people's own subjective emotions and experiences in understanding happiness; this is particularly so in research on children's happiness. In 2009, Chaplin noted that happiness research was still predominantly based on surveys that focussed on how happy people are, which examine associations between aspects of (adults') lives and happiness. Movements towards more qualitative methods in happiness research have been slow. Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick & Wissig (2011) argue that approaches that combine methods will benefit happiness research, and that asking lay people what happiness is for them is important. Research on children's conceptualisations of happiness is still very rare, most of it being concerned with determinants of well-being rather than with what young

people understand by the term “happiness”, as noted by the Spanish researchers Lopez-Perez, Sanchez & Gummerum (2016). Moreover, research on children’s happiness still primarily utilises adult-driven models of subjective well-being, despite growing recognition that these do not reflect children’s own views (see Chapter 3 for further discussion).

My own previous research has focussed on young people’s well-being from various perspectives. My Psychology BSc (Hons) dissertation investigated the relationship between materialism, self-esteem and peer influence for a group of young adolescents using a mixed-methods study. I then wanted to investigate further how materialistic values, and support from parents and peers, were associated with young people’s materialism and well-being. My MSc by Research dissertation was a quantitative correlational study investigating these relationships. Statistical findings of this study explained 51% of the variance in materialism of the young people, but only 28% of the variance in well-being. I was left with many questions. These concerned the methodological problems associated with questionnaires, including the potential distortion involved in forced choice options, the fact that a survey collects responses at just one point in time, the problem of variation in respondents’ understanding of questions, as well as variation in their motivation to complete questionnaires properly. Most importantly, I realised that questionnaires and quantitative measurements provided little insight into what young people themselves thought about their relationships and their well-being.

There are many differing views about ways of researching children and childhood, and about children’s position within the research process (Christensen & James, 2008). Psychology has received much criticism from researchers in the field of Childhood Studies both for its positivistic approach to investigating children’s development, and for its subordinate positioning of children in research (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). For example, Prout &

James argue that concepts of development and socialization persist despite criticism, and the fact that even though there has been “widespread discussion of the need for cognitive and developmental psychology to locate itself within a social and cultural context, only a minority of recently published empirical research even faintly considers this possibility” (Prout & James, 2015, p. 18). However, they acknowledge that psychologists interested in childhood have now begun to understand child development as something that occurs within a social context, albeit that “The project of integrating social and psychological perspectives has turned out to be a complex one” (Prout & James, 2015, p. 20). The need for psychology to engage in a diversification of methods in researching with children, and to consider children as active social agents rather than as objects of research is discussed further in Chapter 4 in this thesis.

The burgeoning empirical enquiry into happiness and subjective well-being is discussed further in the following literature review chapters. International and national children’s rights movements, along with The Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC, (United Nations, 1989), emphasize that it is important to listen to children and to understand the meanings of things for them. In this thesis, I use a qualitative approach to consider how a group of young people attach meanings to happiness through their lived experiences. I collected data at a large, multicultural school in an area of high deprivation in South Central England. In the first phase of data collection, forty young people from School Years 9 and 10 (ages 13-15) completed happiness questionnaires, including the happiness maps that I devised. Six months later, discussion groups (with two additional participants who had not previously completed the happiness questionnaires) and individual interviews followed up on themes that had emerged from the happiness maps, and further explored young people experiences of happiness.

The findings from my study have the potential to provide a critical new insight into child well-being. Engaging with young people's own perspectives allows me to understand what counts as happiness for young people, what affects happiness from their viewpoint, how it forms part of their lives, and how important happiness is to them. Within this thesis, I have used the terms "children" and "young people" interchangeably. The interchangeable terms reflects the wider literature on children's subjective well-being and happiness, which sometimes accounts for children up to the age of 16, and sometimes 18.

This thesis begins with a review of the literature on subjective well-being and happiness (Chapter 2), followed by a review of literature on young people's happiness (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 then outlines the methodological approach that I adopted and the methods I used. Chapters 5 to 8 analyse the key findings, followed by a final conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER 2: HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: DEFINITIONS, MODELS AND CRITIQUES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how happiness is predominantly defined and understood under the heading of subjective well-being (SWB). Objective, or economic, measures of well-being are not included here, as this thesis focuses on how individuals appraise and understand their happiness. [For an example of research on objective indicators of well-being, see the work of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (<http://www.oecd.org>).] Happiness still has no standard definition within the psychological literature. The concept has been constructed, deconstructed, aligned with various perspectives, and renamed in many forms (well-being, life satisfaction, etc.) Section 2.2 briefly describes the philosophical origins of the psychological definitions of happiness and subjective well-being. Section 2.3 reviews models of SWB, including Diener's (1984) psychological theory, which has provided the main point of reference for most of the subsequent literature on the topic. Critiques of the different models and measurements of well-being are discussed. These lead to the outline of my argument for the need to take a different approach to understand what happiness means for young people.

2.2 PHILOSOPHICAL DEFINITIONS OF HAPPINESS INFORMING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Philosophically, happiness has usually been taken to relate to the moral question of what constitutes the good life (Ahmed, 2007). Living the good life has been an aim since the time of the Ancient Greeks. Vittersø (2013b) writes that the Greeks had four competing conceptualisations of happiness: firstly, that of pure hedonism representing the pursuit of total pleasures of the moment; secondly, Epicurean hedonism whereby the emphasis is to

seek pleasure in a holistic life, rather than living a life focussed on achieving individual pleasurable experiences; thirdly, a Stoic conceptualisation of happiness as produced by removing oneself from entanglement in emotional experiences; and fourthly, to follow the Aristotelian endorsement of eudaimonia: living a life of excellence and virtue, developing one's intellectual capacity to make wise decisions in life and thereby developing oneself to one's true potential (Huta, 2013, p. 202). This last definition has been modified somewhat so as to treat happiness as the flourishing of an individual, in the sense of achieving one's potential, competence and mastery of one's environment.

Although in 1984 Diener suggested that eudaimonia is not the modern conceptualisation of happiness, this changed in the ensuing happiness/SWB research. This literature review will also consider how eudaimonic happiness has been valued over alternatives such as hedonic or simple pleasure-seeking forms of happiness. However, ways of understanding and measuring subjective well-being and happiness are still evolving.

Often the words “happiness” and “subjective well-being” are used interchangeably in research, based on inter-correlations of associated variables, despite acknowledgement that they may not refer to the same thing. The World Happiness Report 2017 (see below) even recognises that the measures it uses to account for life evaluations (used as a proxy measurement for happiness) may be explained and accounted for by “other better variables or [by] un-measurable other factors” (Helliwell et al., 2017, p.19).

2.3 MODELS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

2.3.1 Diener's Model of SWB

In 1984, when Diener wrote his review of SWB, he stressed that advances in measuring SWB are needed for “scientific understanding” and to “provide clearer definitions for the

components of subjective well-being” (Diener, 1984, p. 543). Diener grouped these definitions of SWB into three categories.

His first category followed Aristotle’s philosophy that eudaimonia could only be gained by leading a virtuous life. Diener’s second category of defining SWB addressed how people evaluate their lives in a positive way; this has become the cognitive component of the predominant model of SWB, life satisfaction. According to Diener, this requires individuals to say what a good life is for them. The adoption of this as a definition has led to the development of many scales that aim to measure life satisfaction. Proctor, Linley and Maltby (2009) later highlight the momentum of positive psychology that promotes factors associated with greater life satisfaction to act as a buffer, or guard against risk factors associated with psychopathology and poor mental health. However, as discussed in the critique of Huebner’s (1994) multi-dimensional life satisfaction scale in Chapter 3, life satisfaction scales relate to different theoretical ideas (for example the self-concept), and “life satisfaction” and “happiness” are different concepts. Inherent in any measurement scales are pre-defined notions about what a good life is.

Finally, Diener discussed the SWB definition category of affect, or emotional experiences. In 1984, Diener argues that defining happiness as experiencing more positive affect than negative affect is “closest to the way this term is used in everyday discourse” (Diener, 1984, p. 543). It is interesting to note that in the subsequent development of SWB research, negative emotions and affect are neglected (see, for example Gilman, 2001); and also in the *Good Childhood Reports*, discussed in Chapter 3.

Diener concedes that the term “happiness” has several “fuzzy” meanings despite its frequent appearance in discourse; an important point that has been overlooked in most subsequent research into happiness, but one which this thesis will return to. However, despite Diener’s

(1984) own exhortation for researchers to press forward in developing measures of SWB, he also raised issues about construct validity. These potential problems include the fact that people's mood at the time of completing a test may influence their responses, and additionally that their responses can be influenced by other questionnaire items that they have completed just prior to the measurement of SWB. Furthermore, Diener estimated that the "percentage of variance in the happiness measures that is due to person factors is between 30 and 49" (Diener, 1984, p. 551), although he goes on to argue that a person's environmental factors would be relatively stable, and therefore person factors would not determine the preponderance of the variance in happiness. It is worth noting that explanations of variance in subjective well-being are constantly changing, alongside the measures themselves, as discussed in the World Happiness Report 2017 (Helliwell et al., 2017, p. 9).

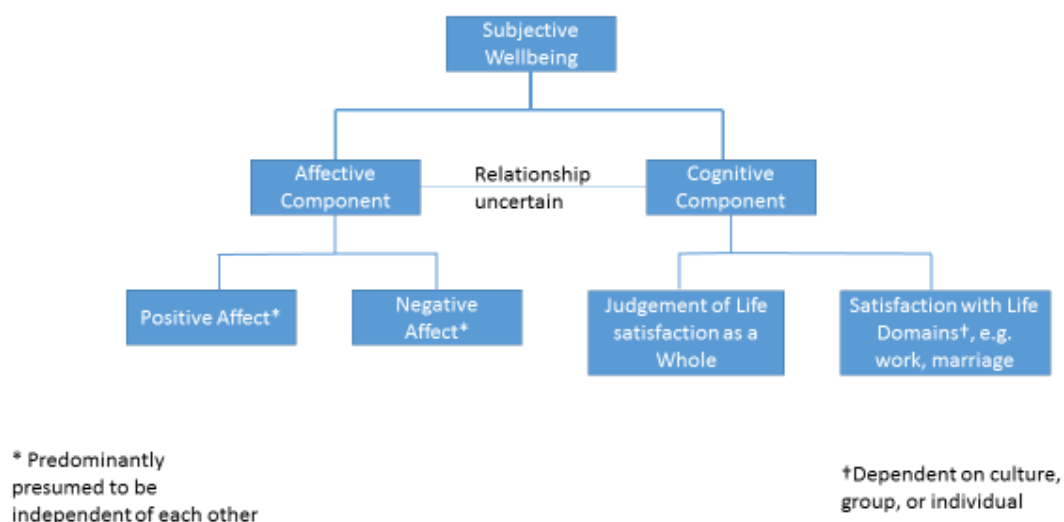
Regarding the validity of self-report measures of SWB, Diener raises the point that people who are in fact unhappy may rate themselves as happy. In some cultures and groups, Diener maintains, being happy could be normative (desirable), and this may influence how people choose to complete happiness questionnaires. This question of the normative values of happiness and their influence on young people will be returned to in Chapters 5 and 7 in this thesis.

Although Diener broaches many issues of SWB measurement, he still asserts that measures of SWB "seem to contain a certain amount of valid variance" (Diener, 1984, p. 551), and is encouraged that many measures moderately correlate with each other, possess "adequate" temporal reliability and internal consistency, and have great potential for research into relationships with other variables. In his concluding remarks on the importance of potential variables that influence a person's SWB, he admits that there are vast numbers of factors that can influence it, and that it is very unlikely that SWB will be accounted for by a small

number of powerful variables. This has not stopped the hunt for these dominant variables in subsequent research on happiness and SWB.

Diener's emphasis is on the need to improve measurement of SWB in order to advance science and to investigate relationships between SWB and other variables. He maintains, however, three fundamental points about SWB. The first is that, by its very nature, it is subjective, not objective: it relates to individuals' perspectives on their lives. The second is that SWB includes positive measures, and not just negative measures. And the third is that SWB includes a global assessment of a person's life. This has led to the predominant structure of SWB that has been adopted in the literature, illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Structure of Diener's (1984) SWB model, based on the experience of well-being



In considering the structure of SWB, Diener (1984) notes that enquiry into domains of life satisfaction (for example, satisfaction with work) is culturally dependent. He further notes that domain satisfaction differs by age. Notably, Diener also writes that the subdomains of

life satisfaction that are “closest and most immediate to people’s personal lives are those that most influence SWB” (Diener, 1984, p. 545).

In their review of empirical studies of youth life satisfaction, Proctor et al., (2009) outline the general psychological approach to studying happiness. This aligns with Diener’s SWB model, covering personal feelings, emotions and appraisals of one’s life. Lopez-Perez and Wilson (2015) also subscribe to the view that happiness consists of overall life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect. They highlight the problem that despite broad agreement in the literature that happiness is life satisfaction, enjoying positive affect and minimum negative affect, there are still disagreements about how to measure happiness. Procedures for measuring happiness abound. In their study comparing mothers’ and children’s ratings of happiness, Hills and Argyle (2002) used the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire short form (OHQ-sf), which consists of eight statements measured on a 6 point Likert type response scale. For example, “I feel that life is very rewarding” was scored from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. This scale is drawn from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, which in turn was derived by reversing items from the Beck Depression Inventory designed for use with clinical populations to diagnose depression and anxiety. The adults and children in the Lopez-Perez study also completed the General Happiness Single-Item Scale (GHS-IS) (Abdel-Khalek, 2006), which asks respondents to answer “Do you feel happy in general?”, this time using an 11 point scale from 0-10.

Lambert et al., (2014) accept Seligman’s (2002) argument that there is a lack of conceptual clarity around the often interchangeable terms of happiness, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction. Whilst aiming to uncover factors positively and negatively associated with happiness, their measurement of happiness in the study was drawn from a WHO index of well-being originally designed for patients suffering from diabetes, alongside a single item, 3 point Likert scale asking participants to rate their general mood, and a single item measure of

life satisfaction on a 4 point Likert scale. Becchetti, Corrado and Sama's (2013) paper that was incorporated into the 2016 World Happiness Report, argued that life satisfaction questions are often problematic as indicators of well-being and happiness: numerical scale responses to questions of life satisfaction prevent intuitive responses that reflect how people think; the weighting of potential sub-components of measures are implicit but not calculated, (for example people's perspectives on life); and linguistic nuances of the term life satisfaction vary, particularly cross-culturally. The point about the multiples measures, and lack of agreement on which measures to use, corresponds to a related argument voiced by Thin (2016, p. 557), who suggests that there may be some interesting and useful measures of aspects of well-being, but to believe that they can be a reliable and valid measure of something that is inherently changeable and debatable in its nature is unrealistic.

Gilman (2001) endorses the model of subjective well-being (SWB) as having two distinct but related components: affect, described as positive and negative emotions, and global life satisfaction as a cognitive appraisal of one's perceived quality of life. Like many other researchers, however, Gilman (2001) addresses the cognitive element only in his study of adolescent happiness, claiming that emotions are too ephemeral to measure, and that the majority of life appraisals are made through cognitive judgements. However, the importance of including emotions in subjective well-being research is finally beginning to be recognised, "as these day-to-day emotions capture a different aspect of children's well-being and have different association with important aspects like bullying" (The Children's Society, 2016b, p. 9).

2.3.2 Defining and operationalising psychological well-being

Emerging just a few years after Diener's model of SWB was the counter-argument of Ryff (1989), who maintained that psychological well-being was still conceptually under defined

within the literature. The theoretical underpinning of happiness was absent, resulting in studies that failed to include or even address key areas of “positive functioning” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1069). Ryff argues that many of the instruments that are popularly used to measure well-being were developed in very specific contexts, for example gerontology, and, as a result, existing models of investigating well-being are not based upon adequate theoretical constructs. Ryff turned to theories of optimal positive functioning and life-span development, which led to her operationalising a rather different dimensional model of psychological well-being. These dimensions are: self-acceptance, holding positive attitudes towards oneself; positive, strong, warm relations with others; autonomy, emphasising individual choice and reliance on oneself; environmental mastery, a developmental concept in which people’s maturity enables them to fully function in their ever-changing environments; feeling that one has a sense of purpose in life, that one’s life has meaning; and lastly, personal growth, the ability to continually develop towards reaching one’s potential. Ryff (1989) reports that the operationalising of these dimensions was successful in her study of 321 adults, and this approach to understanding psychological well-being fills in many theoretical gaps.

She calls for further research to understand how and why these dimensions of psychological well-being vary, as well as highlighting the need for research into the critical influences on well-being. To a large extent, this call has begun to be addressed for children only in recent years, and is central to the work of the Children’s Society in their *Good Childhood Reports* (see Chapter 3). However, Ryff’s suggestion that well-being research should also investigate life experiences and opportunities available to individuals has been unheeded until even more recently in happiness research, and particularly so with regard to children and young people’s happiness. Ryff (1989) does concede that her dimensional model of psychological well-being could be criticised as one that “reflects middle class values” (Ryff, 1989, p. 1079) but argues that this should not mean that it should be ignored; rather that research is needed to see how

much theories of well-being account for the values and ideals of people. Much research on happiness does not ask this question, instead concentrating on identifying correlations with other aspects of well-being with little attempt to investigate the perspectives of people themselves.

2.3.3 The Oxford Handbook of Happiness' Psychological Definitions of Happiness

The definitions discussed in this section are from chapters of the *Oxford Handbook of Happiness* (David, Boniwell, & Ayers, 2013). This book is regarded as a landmark comprehensive single volume text on happiness studies, primarily but not exclusively concentrating on psychological perspectives (Weijers et al., 2013). Two of the editors (Boniwell and Ayers) are positive psychologists (emphasising individuals' strengths and capabilities, rather than their weaknesses) and the first editor, Dr. Susan David, founded Evidence Based Psychology (a leadership development organisation) and is an expert on emotional intelligence. The range of definitions of happiness within psychological understanding discussed in the *Oxford Handbook of Happiness* illustrate that there is little agreement within this discipline on what happiness is, or how it can best be measured.

Ahmed (2007) argues that there have been two main trends in happiness studies within academic scholarship: the “science” of happiness, encompassing economics, social policy and psychology; and “classical happiness”, encompassing philosophy and literature. Vittersø (2013b) states in the chapter on psychological definitions of happiness that research seeks to identify generative mechanisms for “a good life”, echoing the earlier exposition of Diener (1984). Understanding and measuring subjective well-being is termed a science, according to the World Happiness Reports. Vittersø argues that we need to understand the theoretical concepts of these generative mechanisms in order to move forward in research and understanding on happiness. The implication is clearly that if the study of happiness is a

science, it can be empirically investigated and measured, with defined outcomes. For example, the World Happiness Reports currently measure a life evaluation using the Cantril Ladder (scoring from 0 as the worst possible life to 10 as the best possible life), as a proxy for happiness or well-being. Differences in life evaluations are accounted for by six social variables: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption (Helliwell et al., 2017, p. 3). However, the most recent World Happiness Report (2017) has also begun to recognise that research on experience and emotions should be accounted for alongside variables relating to “life circumstances in explaining higher life evaluations” (Helliwell et al., 2017, p. 9). This argument is very similar to Ryff’s (1989); however, it seems that happiness research has remained obstinately centred on a particular set of variable-related explanations for almost thirty years. This thesis asks whether happiness can in fact be understood and measured according to the specific models of well-being that dominate the literature.

Vittersø outlines the emergence of the scientific study of happiness in the late 1950s with research into life satisfaction (Gurin, Veroff, Feld, 1960; Cantril 1965, cited in Vittersø, 2013b, p. 156) and thence to subjective well-being research (e.g. Andrews & Whitney (1976, cited in Vittersø, 2013b); and the work of Diener (1984), which has been reviewed above. This model contextualises much of the current constructions of happiness, such as those that have been pursued and developed by policy researchers and employed by international comparisons into child subjective well-being firmly in the domain of psychological understanding.

2.3.4 Happiness: Hedonia and Eudaimonia as Conceptions of the Good Life

Huta (2013) distinguishes between eudaimonia and hedonia in proposing how happiness should be defined. Interestingly, Huta chooses the term “hedonia” as she states that related

terms like “hedonism” and “hedonistic” have “accumulated too many negative connotations, and I do not view hedonia as maladaptive (unless taken to extremes)” (Huta, 2013, p. 213). Huta suggests that the differences between eudaimonia and hedonia can be understood in terms of one’s motives for activities: eudaimonic motives are to use and develop the best in oneself; hedonic motives are to experience pleasure and comfort. Eudaimonia is centred on one’s personal values, argues Huta. If we are to be able to compare them, we need to conceptualise them as behaviours. Even so, eudaimonia is not a simple single phenomenon and has been associated with many different ideas, including self-actualisation; being true to one’s understanding of who one is; maturity; being fully-functioning; autonomy; being immersed in the moment; flourishing and well-being; and living a life of meaning.

Niemiec and Ryan propose that self-determination theory (SDT) (see Deci & Ryan, 1985) for a full description of SDT) offers a better pathway to the good life than others, supporting a eudaimonic approach to well-being (Niemiec & Ryan, 2013). According to Niemiec and Ryan, a hedonic approach to well-being is based on life appraisals, the experience of pleasant emotions, and the absence of unpleasant emotions, these together constituting subjective well-being. Hedonia fits with a culturally relativist approach (culturally valued norms, beliefs, and behaviours). Niemiec and Ryan maintain that SDT is a universal route to excellence for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity and class. However, such a contention has not been accepted across the literature; for example, one of the core psychological needs underpinning SDT is that of autonomy, which could be thought of as pertaining to Western, capitalist societies much more than to many other societies. The eudaimonic search for an “authentic self” has also been criticised by Thin (2016, p. 548), who argues that the notion that there is a “true self” that can be discovered is inherently problematic, and furthermore, largely absent in Aristotle’s writings on achieving the good life. Niemiec and Ryan (2013) state that it is our human nature to seek to be *fully adaptive* and *optimally functioning*,

thereby achieving *organismic wellness*. In addition to the basic psychological need for autonomy (experiencing and enjoying choice, volition, and investing ourselves in something), SDT identifies two further basic psychological needs: that of competence (the ability to operate effectively, to achieve mastery over tasks); and the need for relatedness (to experience true meaningful connections with others). As outlined in the eudaimonic-hedonic distinction by Huta (2012; 2013), the concept of eudaimonism, and in particular SDT, recognise that happiness is associated with the adoption of particular values and practices geared towards the attainment of life goals. This pursuit has been criticised by Thin (2016, p.550), arguing that it is ambiguous: striving for excellence is not always a good thing, and can be psychologically harmful and imbalanced.

2.3.5 Developing models of Subjective Well-being

According to Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) Subjective Well-being (SWB) rests on a multidimensional evaluation of life, consisting of a cognitive appraisal of how well one's life is going, described as life satisfaction (global, and then domain specific), along with affective evaluations of life based on emotions and moods. Psychological wellbeing is regarded as part of SWB, but consists of two dimensions: "hedonic (the pursuit of pleasure and happiness) and eudaimonic (the pursuit of personal growth, meaning and purpose in life)" (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2014, p. 209).

The dominant force of the positive psychology movement investigates happiness from these two distinct conceptualisations: hedonic SWB (with research focusing on positive emotions and life satisfaction) and eudaimonic or psychological well-being, focusing on meaning in life, personal development, and efforts towards socially shared goals and values, which are inherently culturally determined (Delle Fave et al., 2011).

2.3.6 Hedonism versus Eudaimonism

Perhaps an important point when considering a eudaimonistic orientation is the dismissal of what people enjoy and are interested in as worthless, in terms of making them happy. Thin (2016, p. 544) articulates that eudaimonism is associated with disconcerting judgements: snobbish attitudes towards pleasure, a scepticism of research that values subjective experiences and self-reports. Eudaimonism, argues Thin, exalts aims of achieving authenticity and personal excellence. These value judgements pervade the language of empirical and theoretical debates on adolescent happiness, with the implication that young people's aim should be to move beyond hedonism and enjoying life for its own sake, into a grown up world, where self-improvement and contributing productively to society are the goals of personal happiness. Gilman (2001, p.752) exemplifies this stance, "...the developmental period of adolescence is viewed as a critical transition period where selfish (i.e. hedonistic) pursuits are progressively replaced by a commitment to social activities... adolescents are viewed as being caught between short-term gratification (Magen, 1996) and adopting new values that conform to societal norms on what constitutes positive social behaviours (Bal-Tar, 1982)". In this way, hedonic pursuits become devalued, and dismissed as youthful folly to be grown out of: the implication is clear that doing things you enjoy is not compatible with pro-social behaviours, and becoming a valued person in society. Thin (2016, p. 545) maintains that pitting eudaimonism and hedonism against one another is unhelpful and counter-intuitive, as both are ultimately concerned with "better living", and that people need to find their own "optimal balance" of things that are enjoyable and valuable.

Huta & Waterman (2014) surveyed how eudaimonia and hedonia was defined and operationalized in the literature. They argue that measures assessing hedonia and eudaimonia fall into four categories of analysis: *Orientations/values/motives/goals*; *Behaviour* characteristics and contents; *Cognitive-affective experiences*; *Ways of functioning*. I have

argued that in the development of the models of happiness and well-being above, research into *experiences* of happiness, and of how individuals understand what happiness is for them, is still absent from much of the current conceptualisations of happiness. Huta and Waterman (2014) however, give prominence to the work of Delle Fave et al., (2011) in the area of cognitive-affective experiences of happiness studies. Thin, too, emphasises the importance of “normal understandings of happiness”, maintaining that people understand that happiness can include both “hasty quantitative judgements about feelings as well as much more complex narratives about the quality and meaning of lives” (Thin, 2016, p. 552).

2.3.7 Moving towards incorporating individual perspectives on happiness

Delle Fave et al., (2011) conducted mixed methods trans-national research (seven countries, not including the UK) using their own developed Eudaimonic and Hedonic Happiness Inventory (EHHI) which asks participants several open-ended questions about what happiness means to them, and what and why things in their life are meaningful. Additionally, in the EHHI, participants complete quantitative measures of happiness and meaningfulness across 11 different domains. Delle Fave et al., convincingly contend the strength of a mixed methods approach towards researching happiness, which moves away from the limitations of reliance on a single method, and stresses the importance of asking lay people qualitative questions about what happiness is for them.

According to Delle Fave et al., (2011, p. 198), participants’ definitions of happiness could be divided into those that were “situational” (context- domain related) and those that were expressing “internal dimensions of happiness” (content- psychological related). Most of the definitions of happiness provided included multiple aspects. The authors admit that the psychological can be present within the situational, and that both features need to be considered when investigating how happiness is defined. Although not explored in this

study, Delle Fave et al. (2011) state that the use of contextual vs. psychological definitions may be influenced by culture, educational level and the extent to which people engage with abstract thinking and expression. Although Delle Fave et al. (2011) are interested in people's experience of happiness, and in people's definitions of happiness as a starting point, their research then moves into the realm of coding the responses to see how much they reflect the two predominant models of conceptualising psychological-subjective well-being.

2.3.8 Aims of this thesis

In this thesis, I focus on the importance of understanding what happiness means for young people, partially resonating with Delle Fave et al.'s (2011) work. However, whilst I am mindful of the debates around the distinction between hedonia and eudaimonia, it is not one of the aims of my study to categorise emergent themes from the data in this way. It is rather my aim to explore what happiness means for young people from *their* perspective, to ask what counts as happiness, how important happiness is for them, and in what ways their experiences of happiness permeate their lives, their expectations and hopes for the future.

CHAPTER 3: CHILDREN'S HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Improving happiness and subjective well-being is an international policy goal of social progress for hundreds of countries across the world (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2017, p.3). Ahmed (2007) documented the rise of the “happiness industry”: encompassing books; courses in how to be happy, ranging from the adoption of Eastern Buddhist philosophy to the proliferation of self-help books and texts on positive psychology that focus on what makes us feel good. This co-occurred with the “happiness turn” (Ahmed, 2007): the rise of international surveys and reports measuring happiness, and its inclusion in policy and governance frameworks. In the World Happiness Reports, measurements of happiness began to appear alongside GDP as indicators of progress and as a basis for policy decisions. Since 2010, it has been UK government policy to develop “measures of national well-being” to assess objective and subjective evaluations of how they feel about their lives. Section 3.2 outlines some key reports on happiness and SWB, leading to a discussion of the *Good Childhood Reports*. It considers methodological issues of measurement, and how happiness and subjective well-being terminology, language and meaning change across reports and report series. Section 3.3 then reviews a selection of studies on young people’s happiness, moving from those that are entirely defined by existing models of SWB, to the few that use children’s own conceptualisations. The chapter concludes by summarising arguments for the need to take a different approach from purely quantitative measurements in order to understand what happiness means for young people.

3.2 KEY REPORTS ON HAPPINESS AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

3.2.1 *The World Happiness Report*

The World Happiness Report (thereafter WHR) is in its fifth edition as of 2017. Edited primarily by eminent economists such as John Helliwell and Richard Layard, the World Happiness Reports bring together research documenting trends aimed at understanding how countries are faring in international happiness rankings, and the reasons for the differences. The influence of economists on these reports is apparent from the explanation given for why Norway leads the World Happiness Rankings 2017: prudent oil management strategies combined with delayed gratification- investing profits for the future rather than spending them straight away. Indeed, happiness, or subjective well-being (terms used interchangeably in the WHR), is becoming an important complementary measure alongside Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP). There is now an International Day of Happiness (March 20th), which is jointly managed by the United Nations and Illien Global (<http://www.illienglobal.com/happiness/international-day-of-happiness>).

There is a section on childhood and adolescent happiness in Chapter Five of the WHR 2017. It looks at the determinants of adult happiness and misery, and recognises the importance of child happiness for this: “While much could be done to improve human life by policies directed at adults, as much or more could be done by focusing on children” (Helliwell et al., 2017, p. 134). However, the ultimate purpose of the included research on child well-being is to learn how to improve adult happiness; it is concerned with factors in child development that predict adult life satisfaction (Helliwell et al., 2017, p. 134). The WHR 2017 documents that emotional health and child behaviour are better predictors of development than academic qualifications, with the mental health of the child’s mother the strongest predictor of the emotional and behavioural health of the child. The child’s individual primary and secondary

schools are also partial predictors of children's emotional and behavioural development as well as academic achievement, alongside parental income. Whilst recognition of social and developmental childhood influences and predictors of happiness must be welcomed alongside economic explanations of well-being, for these to be reported and valued simply as precursors to adult life satisfaction demonstrates that, nationally and internationally, there is still much work to be done to prioritise the lives and happiness of children.

3.2.2 International and National Policies on Children's Rights and Needs

Concern with children's happiness and well-being has developed from changes in the social positioning of children in society, and growing recognition of children's rights. Improving the lives of children as an internationally documented official policy concern was earmarked with the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1924. The adoption of the philosophy that children (young people under the age of 18) have needs that are specific to them has been embodied in the work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), originally set up to provide emergency help for children across Europe and China after the second world war. This work has developed and operates both at an emergency humanitarian level for children in danger and in encouraging and upholding children's rights, irrespective of country, ethnicity or cultural background. According to the philosophy of UNICEF, children have needs: survival, growing up, and achieving their potential. From these identified needs, emerged the international convention on children's rights, "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989). Articles 1-42 of the Convention detail that children's voices must be heard, children must be taken seriously, be protected, have an entitlement to free state education, a right to be with their parents (unless suffering abuse or neglect), and to play and develop according to their potential. Children's happiness is not directly included as a right, but is implicit in many articles, including Articles 15 and 31, which concern their rights to meet with other children and to relax, play and take

participate in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities (UNICEF UK, 2010). Articles 43-54 detail how adults and governments need to work together to ensure that children's rights are met. The move towards placing children at the forefront of state, adult and parental consciousness is now an international goal. The United Kingdom signed the Convention in 1990, and it came into force in 1992. The UK Government reports on its progress in implementing the UNCRC every five years, and an annual report is produced on children's rights in England (Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2017).

3.2.3 UNICEF (2007) Report Card on Child Well-being

With most nations adopting a legal obligation to meet UNICEF's identified children's needs and rights, international comparisons have been carried out on how countries are engaging and progressing with improving children's well-being. UNICEF has produced a series of *Report Cards* on aspects of child well-being. The United Kingdom is an industrialized, wealthy nation, and was one of twenty-one such countries to be compared on six dimensions of child-wellbeing in UNICEF's *Report Card 7* (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007). The UK's results were poor across the six dimensions measured: child material well-being (18th out of 21 OECD countries), health and safety (ranked 12/21), educational well-being (ranked 17/21), family and peer relationships (ranked 21/21), behaviours and risks (ranked 21/21), and subjective well-being (ranked 20/20- there was no comparable data for the USA on subjective well-being). The UK was found to be bottom of the 21 OECD countries on child well-being overall. According to this well-publicised report, the UK was 'failing' the needs and rights of its children. However, there have been criticisms of the concept of children's needs. For example, Woodhead (1997) warns that discussions of children's needs treat them as timeless and universal, and cultural assumptions and judgements are inherent in defining those needs. Morrow and Mayall (2009) point out that although the UNICEF (2007) report does make a useful contribution to research on aspects affecting children's lives, there

were problems with the conceptualisation and quantitative measures of child well-being used. They highlight that the report only used data that was already available, some of which was old, some data was absent for some countries on some dimensions, and limited data came from children themselves. Indicators were averaged to arrive at scores on the six dimensions of well-being, which may not have accurately reflected their relative importance. For example, the dimension “material well-being” did not account for distribution of income within countries, or for resources that are perhaps available to children outside of their homes (e.g. in schools and libraries). Combining quantitative with qualitative data would have enabled more systematic and accurate interpretation of the findings (Morrow & Mayall, 2009). A follow up comparative report on the well-being of children in 29 of the world’s most advanced economies showed that the UK’s position had climbed from 21/21 countries in the 2007 report to 16/29 in 2013 (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013). The five (reduced from six in 2007) dimensions of comparison are slightly different (in 2013 they concern material well-being, health and safety, education, behaviours and risk, and housing and environment). The later report highlights the difficulty in obtaining comparable data across nations, including time delays: the 2013 report utilises data from 2008/9, at the beginning of the international financial downturn and government budget cuts, which affected most dimensions of well-being (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013).

The dimension of subjective well-being in the UNICEF (2007) report was included with the intention of taking into account young people’s own perceptions and opinions on their subjective well-being. Measurement was conducted with rating scales, and agreement or disagreement with statements on how they felt about aspects of their lives, and is based on indicators that could be compared between the countries. Children aged 11, 13 and 15 were surveyed on their health (rating their own health as poor, fair, good or excellent); the percentage of children “liking school a lot”; their satisfaction with life (using a rating ladder)

and agreement or disagreement with statements about feeling left out, feeling awkward, and feeling lonely. The survey results present a construction of subjective well-being that has been taken as a partial measurement of children's happiness in subsequent research (e.g. IPSOS Mori, 2011; and The Children's Society *Good Childhood Reports*- see Section 3.2.4 below). This construction of children's happiness placed the UK's children as the unhappiest of those in the 21 OECD countries surveyed. However, the UNICEF (2007) report has been questioned as presenting a deficit model of child well-being, focusing on negative experiences, rather than positive aspects of children's lives (Morrow & Mayall, 2009). In the follow-up comparative report of 2013, children's subjective well-being is not included as one of the contributory dimensions to the total rankings of international child well-being. Subjective well-being is included in a separate section of the report, with the UK's children ranked 14/29 countries. As per the 2007 report, this measurement is obtained from the percentage of children surveyed aged 11, 13 and 15, who rated their life satisfaction at 6 out of 11 on the Cantril ladder of life satisfaction. Criticisms of this measure of subjective well-being have been discussed in Chapter 2; the authors themselves also include issues of cultural norms, complex psychological processes and variability in children's frames of reference that need to be taken into consideration when rating their life satisfaction. However, they note that including a subjective well-being measure is important in giving children themselves the opportunity to "decide what aspects of their lives are most important to them" (UNICEF Office of Research, 2013, p.42), although I would argue that it the extent to which this life satisfaction question allows children to do this is highly debatable.

Following the UNICEF 2007 study into child well-being, UNICEF UK commissioned a scoping study to identify themes that could be explored between the UK and two OECD countries that had higher child well-being than the UK. The resulting qualitative study, conducted by IPSOS MORI Social Research Interview with Agnes Nairn (2011) used filmed

ethnographic research with 24 families with children aged 8-13 in the first phase, focussing on family roles and relationships. The second phase was 36 school-based discussion groups and 12 in-depth interviews with 14 year-olds in order to discuss further themes arising from the first stage as well as children's wider relationships in the context of their lives. Purposive sampling was used in both phases in order to understand what relationships exist between children's well-being, inequality and materialism in the UK, Spain and Sweden. Inequality and materialism were particular areas of concern from the UNICEF (2007) report.

Findings reported in the Ipsos MORI & Nairn (2011) outline that children in all three countries valued time spent with their families and friends as the most important contributors to their happiness. Sporting and creative activities - especially those outdoors - were cherished, although access to these activities was differentiated by family affluence, particularly in the UK. Across the three countries, children wanted and appreciated material goods, particularly technologically related items such as laptops and the latest mobile phones for symbolic and functional reasons. However, conspicuous over-consumption and purchasing of toys that were subsequently forgotten or allowed to be broken dominated family life in the UK, and was almost entirely absent in Spain and Sweden. The authors conclude that the relationship between materialism and well-being is complex. This was particularly so in the UK, where parents and children alike recognised that material goods were not equated with happiness, but where parents felt pressured into buying expensive branded items, and did so regularly, partly to atone for not having time or energy to spend with their children, and partly to negate any potential bullying that their child may experience for not having the "right" product. The findings of the study were analysed in the light of existing literature and are qualitative rather than quantitative in nature.

The Children's Society began their research work on child well-being, in order to understand what young people think about their lives, and to focus on positive rather than negative

indicators of well-being. This research forms the basis of the annual *Good Childhood Reports*.

3.2.4 *The Good Childhood Reports* (The Children's Society, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2015a, 2016a, 2017)

The *Good Childhood Reports* draw on survey work by the Children's Society from 2005-2015. The first *Good Childhood Report* (The Children's Society, 2012) relates to several waves of surveys from 2005-2010. Up to 30,000 children aged 8-16 are included in the total survey work in 2012. By the 2017 *Good Childhood Report*, 60,000 children have contributed to the findings of the reports to date. Each year, the reports have focussed on children's well-being, identifying and highlighting areas of concern. Children's well-being, as measured, increased from 1994-2008, however, by the time of the 2017 report, the Children's Society evidence suggested young people's happiness with their life as a whole and with their friends declined from 2009 onwards, although happiness with their school work rose over the same period. A summary of many of the key findings of the *Good Childhood Reports* from 2012-2017 are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of the Key Findings of the *Good Childhood Reports* 2012-2017

- Most children in the UK are happy, but half a million children between the ages 8-16 have low well-being at any one time.
- Children in England fare particularly poorly in their well-being compared with other UK nations, and in international comparisons:
 - (8th out of 15 countries on 24 out of the 30 measures of child well-being, and 14th out of 15th on the overall measure of life satisfaction, according to the Children's World Survey in the 2015 report.)
 - Low rankings particularly related to those concerning how they felt about themselves and their feelings about school.
- Family relationships had the largest influence on children's subjective well-being, according to the relative predictors of each of the Good Childhood Index on

children's life satisfaction. Children's happiness with family relationships was largely dependent on the quality and stability of relationships. Parental SWB is associated with child SWB. For 14/15 year olds, receiving emotional support from parents had the strongest link to child well-being than other parenting factors including monitoring and supervision.

- Parenting practices come to the fore- emphasising the importance of harmony, support, autonomy granting and control on children's well-being.
- Children not living with their family reported lower levels of satisfaction with life.
- The quality of relationships with friends was also very important to young people's well-being, though not as important as relationships with family.
- The poorest 20% of children surveyed had lower well-being; changes in family income can also affect well-being.
- 5% of children lack 5 or more items from the 10 item child-centred index of material deprivation. For these children, there were striking comparative deficits in well-being overall and in all domains of the Good Childhood Index.
- Material deprivation accounted for 13% of variance in SWB for children surveyed in 2014. Children reporting effects of the economic crisis also had lower SWB. By the time of the 2017 report, over 2 million children are estimated to be worrying about their family struggling to pay bills.
- The 2015 Report revealed that material deprivation and experiencing higher levels of bullying were also associated with lower life satisfaction.
- Happiness with appearance is associated with age and gender. At the age of 10, 25% of children are concerned with appearance, with no significant gender difference. At age 15, 32% of boys and 56% of girls were worried about their appearance. Girls' unhappiness with their appearance is an increasing yearly trend.
- Those not so happy with their appearance were more likely to be frequently bullied.
- An estimated 2.2 million children aged between 10 and 17 are worried about crime in their local area.
- Using a combined measure of life satisfaction and finding life worthwhile for reveals:
 - Four-fifths of children "flourishing"

- One-fifth of 8-15 year olds are below the midpoint
 - 10% score very low and are struggling.
- There was a downward age trend from aged 8 to age 13/14 of children who could be categorised as flourishing using this measure (The Children's Society, 2015b).
- Choice, freedom and autonomy frequently emerge as important for children.
- Children's happiness with the amount of choice they have decreases from ages 8 to 15, and then rises sharply at ages 16/17.
- Interviews on choice with 14/15 year olds revealed that supportive and loving family relationships, coupled with autonomy and choice were important. Appearance and self-expression were part of the significant role that friends and peers play in relation to choice.
- Girls were happier with school than boys.
- Socio-demographic factors accounted for only a small amount of variance in well-being. Although there are some important factors to note:
 - Children aged 14-15 have the lowest average level of well-being;
 - Gender differences reveal boys tend to have higher well-being than girls; girls also experience lower wellbeing in four subdomains of the Good Childhood Index: appearance, time use, friends and health.
 - Being a child in a family living in poverty or with no-one in paid work was also associated with lower well-being.
- Regular use of computers and the Internet is not associated with low well-being. Furthermore, having no access to the Internet outside of school is associated with low well-being.
- High intensity social media use (>4 hours per day) is associated with lower subjective well-being; the effect is stronger for girls.
- Children who were regularly active in sports and games had higher well-being.
- Most children feel positive about the future, although 10% do not. Girls were less positive than boys; and feeling positive declines with age.

3.2.5 Measuring Well-being in the Good Childhood Reports

In the 2012 *Good Childhood Report*, the measurement of subjective well-being or happiness is very similar to Diener's (1984) model (discussed in Chapter 2):

“Subjective well-being, as a concept, refers to people's satisfaction or happiness with their lives as a whole and with particular aspects of their lives. It is generally considered to have two components – one which focuses on people's evaluations of their lives and one which focuses on the positive and negative emotions which they experience. The first of these components – often termed ‘life satisfaction’ - is generally regarded as being fairly stable, whereas the second component – often termed ‘affect’ – is thought to vary more from day to day. This report focuses on the first of these components – life satisfaction – which relates to people's assessment of the quality of their lives both overall and in specific domains” (The Children's Society, 2012, p. 6).

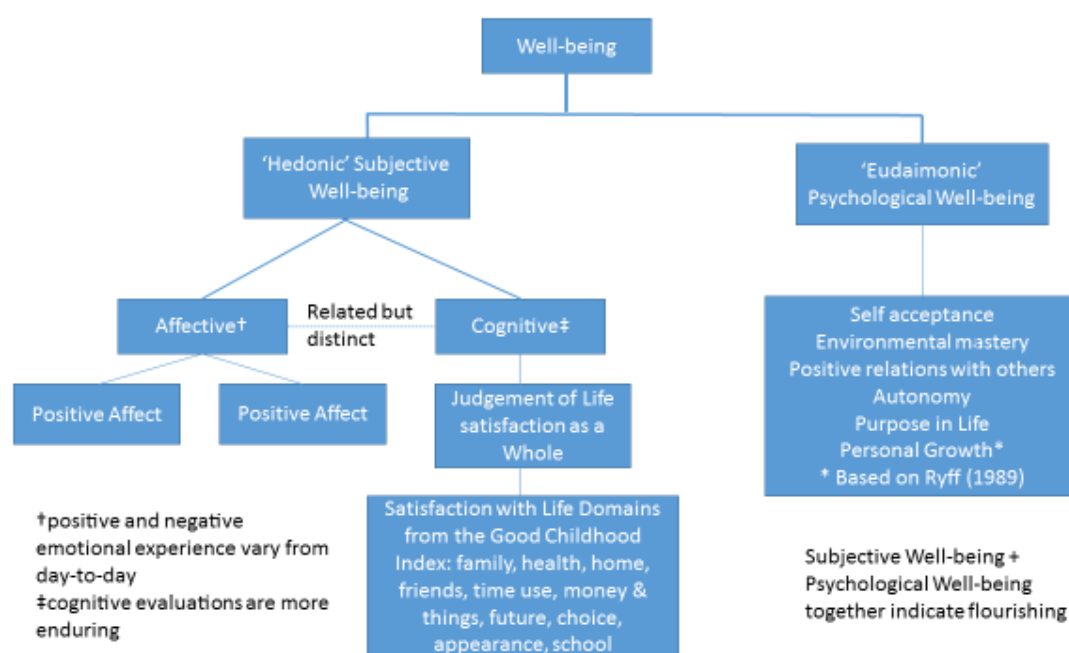
The approach taken to understand young people's subjective well-being in the 2012 report is based on young people's cognitive evaluations of their lives only, without consideration of emotions. It also appears that there is an operationally defined fusion of “well-being”, “happiness” and “life satisfaction”. These are distinct concepts, however, even though often used interchangeably. Some discussion on differences between these concepts is made within the reports, but, at other times, it is more difficult to understand which aspect of young people's lives is being referred to.

From 2012 onwards, The *Good Childhood Reports* utilise the “Good Childhood Index” (Rees, Goswami, & Bradshaw, 2010, p. 3) “which included a measure of overall well-being and questions about happiness in 10 key areas: family; home; money and possessions;

friendships; school; health; appearance; time use; choice and autonomy; the future”. Rees et al., (2010) developed the index from areas that have been identified by children as important, and their research has shown they are “strongly associated” with child well-being.

The changing models used to illustrate (Subjective) Well-being in the *Good Childhood Reports* illustrate the shift towards a eudaimonic perspective. From 2013 onwards, the model of well-being divides into “hedonic well-being” under which the previous SWB model of Diener (1984) (discussed in Chapter 2) sits, and then a separate branch of “eudaimonic” or “psychological wellbeing” which follows ideas of personal growth and development (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Model of Children’s well-being used in the *Good Childhood Reports* from 2013-2017



There is a focus within recent psychological literature on *eudaimonistic happiness* as the only form of happiness that possesses any real merit. With its emphasis on self-improvement, striving for excellence and achieving one’s potential, there are clear similarities with the *psychological* or *eudaimonic* conceptualisation of well-being (happiness) that is deemed

essential for a good childhood, as evidenced in the *Good Childhood Reports* from 2013 onwards (The Children's Society, 2016a). Through these reports, The Children's Society sent the clear message that flourishing (optimal functioning) is what is required, and encouraged policy makers, practitioners and society to support and engage with young people to facilitate this.

The 2013 Report summary centres on specific ages and groups experiencing lower well-being; emerging trends in young people's well-being over time; and the concept of "flourishing". The reports aim to explore the extent to which children are "flourishing". Combining *subjective measures* of child well-being with *psychological measures* of well-being, 82% of children are flourishing (scoring 6 out of 10 and above on two single item measures of satisfaction with life and finding life worthwhile, taken as indicators of their two aspects of well-being: hedonic and eudaimonic), 10% are languishing (scoring 5 and under on both measures) and the remaining 8% are score highly on one measure and low on the second measure (The Children's Society, 2016b, p. 9). However, the 2016 report does acknowledge the lack of a measure of emotional well-being in this concept of flourishing, and indicates that measures of affect should be included in future research.

It is important to consider how subjective well-being is measured within the reports in order to unravel constructions of well-being and happiness. Potential difficulties are illustrated by consideration of the measurement protocols utilised in the 2012 *Good Childhood Report*.

3.2.6 Critique of Child Subjective Well-being Measurement Protocols in the Good Childhood Report (2012)

The measurement of children's wellbeing uses an amended version of a) a multi-dimensional life satisfaction scale (Huebner, 1994); b) the Personal Wellbeing Index-School Children (PWI-SC) (Cummins & Lau, 2005), both of which were drawn upon by several of the

reports' authors to create c) an index of children's well-being used in the report (Rees et al., 2010). I will discuss each of these components:

- a) Huebner (1994) places the importance of perceptions of subjective well-being firmly in the domain of mental health for adults and children alike. Research on adult subjective well-being reveals three inter-related constructs – positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction – the latter operating at a global level over and above specific life domains. And it is argued that a multidimensional model accounting for different life domains is needed. Life satisfaction, according to Huebner (1994), is a personal response to the *quality* of an individual's life, according to the individual's own standards. Huebner maintains that positive and negative subjective well-being have different correlates, and that positive subjective well-being is not restricted to being free from psychopathology, depression and affective disorders. There are two further points of note in the development of Huebner's scale: firstly, that life satisfaction and happiness are described as being related concepts – this is discussed as a criterion for positive mental health. The construct of happiness is derived from its relationship to the self-concept, maintains Huebner. Because happiness is related to self-concept, Huebner argues, it is necessary within the multidimensional model of subjective well-being to differentiate two age-groups of adolescents: “pre-adolescent” (according to Huebner, [US] grades 3-8, which corresponds to ages 8/9-13/14); and “adolescent”, although what exactly differentiates the age-related self-concepts of the two age groups of young people is not indicated. Huebner's scale is designed for use with “pre-adolescents”. Huebner does discuss the rationale of the scale for the younger children, however: children of eight years and above possess intellectual ability to assess their global life satisfaction, and to discriminate satisfaction within

different life domains – family, friends, school, and living environment, self (Huebner states that these domains have been distilled from life satisfaction research with children).

From this discussion, it is already clear that to try to understand subjective well-being, life satisfaction and happiness is to enter difficult territory. Whilst maintaining that these areas are related, Huebner is not clear as to how they are related; happiness itself is said to be related to self-concept, which is not explained, and self-concept differentiates adolescents by age at around 13-14 years of age, again unexplained. There is the further issue of attempting to include notions of happiness, but disregarding emotions in the measure of life satisfaction.

- b) The PWI-SC (Cummins & Lau, 2005) was designed as a parallel form of the adult's Personal Wellbeing Index designed to elicit an understanding of satisfaction with life domains. Cummins and Lau argue that these life domains [for children and adolescents] – standard of living, health, life achievement, personal relationships, personal safety, feeling part of the community, and future security – represent a “first level” deconstruction of the global question of life satisfaction. Whilst the adult version uses the question prefixes of “How satisfied are you with...?” in the children's version the wording is changed to “How happy are you with...?” While Cummins and Lau state that it is recognised that “satisfaction” and “happiness” are not the same thing, they maintain that the data elicited from both formulations is very similar. They do not explain why *happiness* rather than *satisfaction* is chosen for use with children and adolescents, and what the differences in meanings between happiness and satisfaction are. This is an important omission in the theoretical and

empirical grounding of this scale, and further muddies the construct of happiness research with young people.

- c) In the introduction to the report on the development of the index of children's subjective well-being in England, Rees et al., (2010) discuss the importance of understanding what subjective well-being means for young people. This has been done primarily through survey research of thousands of young people. Within the well-being index, Rees et al., (2010) include a single-item measure of happiness with life as a whole, although they point out that this measure is not as "stable" as the multi-item measure of life satisfaction. Indeed the authors found that *happiness* and *life satisfaction* have some different predictors from each other in comparative regression analyses. For example, "friends" were a significant predictor of happiness with life, but an insignificant predictor of life satisfaction. A further limitation of the measures used is that neither model accounts for much more than half of the variation in young people's subjective well-being (52% explained by the ten domains examined under life satisfaction; 56% explained by the same ten domains examined under happiness with life). There is clearly much to be learned about young people's understanding and personal meanings attached to their subjective well-being, their satisfaction with their life, and their happiness.

These criticisms are not intended to detract from the key purposes and findings of the *Good Childhood Reports*, but to illustrate the complexity of defining, understanding and measuring these concepts. The reports aim to find out why and for which children, subjective well-being is higher or lower, and to inform policy. Measurements used and report findings become embedded in our constructions of child subjective well-being however, and it is therefore

important to critically discuss how happiness and subjective well-being are reported within them.

3.2.7 Changing meanings and emphasis of the word “Happiness” in the Good Childhood Reports.

Between 2012 and 2017, the language and emphasis of the *Good Childhood Reports* change. The *Good Childhood Report* (2013) includes “psychological well-being”, and well-being is described as being “far more than just happiness” (The Children’s Society, 2013, p. 8). The 2013 report argues that if child well-being measures are used together with psychological measures, we can understand how children are “flourishing”. Although the phrase “happiness” is played down in the full 2013 *Good Childhood Report*, the summary report still draws on “happiness” domains to explicate their understanding of young people’s well-being, for example, children’s “happiness” with the amount of choice they have falls between the ages of 8-15 and rises again at ages 16/17. The first sentence of the foreword to the 2014 *Good Childhood Report*, by Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of the Children’s Society, follows on from the 2013 report in how it downplays the importance of happiness: “Well-being is about so much more than happiness, going right to the very heart of a good quality of life” (The Children’s Society, 2014a, p. 4). In the foreword to the 2015 *Good Childhood Report*, (The Children’s Society, 2015, p. 3), the Chief Executive again disputes the importance of happiness: “Though it is easy to slip into a short-hand of happiness, well-being is about so much more than this. It is about how young people feel about their lives as a whole, how they feel about their relationships, the amount of choice that they have in their lives, and their future”. This thesis will illuminate that these aspects and more *are part of young people’s perceptions of happiness*, and not separate from it. The 2016 *Good Childhood Report* (The Children’s Society, 2016, p. 8) asks the question “What do we mean by well-being?” and states, “Well-being can mean different things to different people, but this need not undermine the value of this concept”. Perhaps this is an indication of a shift towards

recognition that well-being and happiness are, in fact, matters subject to variation in individual perspective.

3.2.8 Good Childhood Reports call for Government and policymakers to act on the findings

In the 2012 *Good Childhood Report*, The Children's Society proposed that their recommendations should be considered by "parliament, central government and local areas...to support child well-being" (The Children's Society, 2012, p. 7). These recommendations were those of meeting children's needs, including being in a safe environment, having a positive view of themselves, being respected, having opportunities to thrive, learn and develop, and positive relationships with their family and friends.

There is a further plea to policymakers to absorb and act on the findings of the *Good Childhood Reports* in the 2014 report. The focus of the 2015 Report is on identifying areas for intervention and at what point of childhood and adolescence these interventions would have the most impact. The Children's Society once again make an urgent call for policy makers and childcare professionals to act on the findings. In doing so, they request that there should be a broader model of mental health to emphasise positive mental health. They are clear that SWB can be measured, and the findings should be used to inform policy and practice.

In asking the question, "Why does children's subjective well-being matter?" (The Children's Society, 2015b, p. 5), the report outlines the aim of their research:

"The Children's Society's main goal in initiating the well-being research programme was to focus on childhood in its own right, rather than just a preparation for adulthood, and to ensure that children's views and experiences are taken into account more fully in the debate about well-being. Measures of children's subjective well-

being provide a counterweight to measures that have tended to dominate discussions of children's lives, such as educational attainment, or drinking and drug use. These are important indicators of well-being and well-becoming but only part of the picture. As argued in the World Happiness Report 2015, "If schools do not measure the well-being of their children, but do measure their intellectual development, the latter will always take precedence".

This is an interesting point about where the responsibility lies for measuring children's well-being: in the UK, a shift has been to make it the responsibility of schools (see Section 3.2.9 below).

There is a renewed call in the 2016 Report for policymakers to act on the findings of the *Good Childhood Reports*, appealing directly to the then newly-elected UK Government.

There is a clear sense of growing frustration that their work is not being taken forward into policy and practice. Early into the executive summary is a new page entitled

"Recommendations for Change", with the following points made: "Government policy needs to incorporate legally binding, sufficiently funded access for children and young people to mental health and well-being support services within educational settings" (The Children's Society, 2016b, p. 4) .

The second policy recommendation is a stark admonition of the Government for their failure to act on the findings of the *Good Childhood Reports*, and to continue to monitor young people's well-being: "The Government must commit to understanding and acting on children's well-being. At the moment there is no firm commitment from the Government that children's well-being will continue to be measured. With a new Government in place, now is the time to reaffirm the commitment to monitoring well-being – and particularly children's well-being across the UK" (The Children's Society, 2016b, p. 4). The third policy

recommendation is for children and young people to have a voice about their well-being at a local level, and indicates a need to collate local level data about children's lives.

Each year, the pleas for Government and policymakers to act on and commit to the findings of the *Good Childhood Reports* have grown louder. The authors of the reports are clearly saying that their findings are being unheeded by those in a position to act and improve the well-being and happiness of young people in this country.

3.2.9 Summary of UK Government Reports on Measuring Child Well-being, including age categorisations of Children, Adolescents and Young People

Existing and on-going research by The Children's Society in their *Good Childhood Reports* has revealed that subjective well-being decreases in adolescence, reaching its lowest point at age 14/15, is differentiated by gender, and is affected by SES and family relationships, amongst other social and cultural factors. Responsibility for policy relating to children and young people's well-being lies primarily within health and education, devolved to local government and on to schools who are deemed best placed to ascertain and meet local needs (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2013; Public Health England, 2015b). There has been recent research focussing on how County Boroughs can support schools in their understanding and promotion of adolescent well-being (e.g. Matthews, Kilgour, Christian, Mori, & Hill, 2015). Matthews et al., (2015) comment on the importance of schools in promoting and influencing young people's well-being during their transition through adolescence.

In 2014, the Office for National Statistics, in conjunction with the Children's Society, assessed children's well-being using 31 measures across seven domains: personal well-being, relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, education and skills (Office for National Statistics, 2014). This was followed up with a second report (Office for

National Statistics, 2015) incorporating a measure of mental health for children, since stakeholders identified that mental health was missing from the initial measures. The 2015 report again concerned children aged 10-15 years old.

Children aged 16 and over are included in the National Well-being datasets, for example in the latest ONS report, *Measuring National Well-being in the UK, Domains and Measures: Sept 2016* (Office for National Statistics, 2016a). Where there are age break-downs within the data sets, the youngest age grouping is predominantly 16-24 years old; occasionally 16-19 years old. This report describes and categorises all ages 16 and over as adults (Office for National Statistics, 2016b). The measures reported present a complex picture of well-being for young people aged 16-24. They had the lowest agreement of all age groups that they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood. 21% of young people showed some evidence of depression or anxiety, but rated their overall health higher than other age. Nearly a quarter revealed that they had no-one to rely on if they had a serious problem; 9% were in an unhappy relationship. 39% of 16-19 year olds said that they were happy yesterday (rating 9 out of 10), 33% that their life was very worthwhile, and 36% that they were very satisfied with life overall (both measured as 9 out of 10). Despite the broad range of measures, there is nothing to indicate in this assessment of well-being why the young people are rating themselves in these ways.

UK Government reports and policy agendas are deploying the age of 15 as the cut-off for “children”, whereas it is the age of 18 for UNICEF and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Stratifying children for UK Government report purposes in this way is not without its problems, as highlighted in a report on Children’s Well-being: “Although there are a number of significant age groups within the children and young people’s agenda (e.g. early years 0 to 5/early childhood 0 to 10, adolescence: early (11 to 15), mid/young people (16 to 18), late/young adults (18 to 24), it is not be (sic) possible to

produce sets of indicators explicitly for each age group, due to restrictions in available data” (Public Health England, 2015, p. 12)

Hall and Montgomery (2000) have raised the problematic issue of how various phases and ages of childhood are labelled and viewed within public discourse. By using labels such as “childhood”, “youth” and “young people”, attitudes towards children ascribed to each of the categories differ. “Children” are accorded the status of innocence and in need of protection, but particularly within the context of social problems, those labelled “youths” are understood to be inherently questionable as to their motives. Hall and Montgomery (2000, p. 13) identify that the “idea of childhood can be deployed strategically”, something which appears to be reflected in the UK government’s policy approach to defining child well-being. For children who can no longer comfortably be regarded as being a “child” in government and public notion, Hall and Montgomery (2000, p. 14) identify a particular range of challenges facing them: “Between childhood and adulthood, obedience and responsibility, innocence and maturity, it is an interstitial, sometimes awkward category with a quite different set of connotations to those of childhood: connotations that are much more in keeping, and which resonate, with an anxious, suspicious and sometimes punitive public response to troubled and troublesome ‘youths’ at home.”

3.3 REVIEW OF STUDIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS

This section reviews some international studies of young people’s happiness, reflecting the conceptualisations of happiness and subjective well-being outlined in Chapter 2, and also in Section 3.2 above. It covers some review studies, for example Proctor et al.’s (2009) assessment of over 100 studies on young people’s life satisfaction. The subsections 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 provide examples of three different approaches to studies of young people’s

happiness. Firstly, in section 3.3.1, there are studies that illustrate correlational approaches to investigating young people's happiness. Here, SWB and psychological models of well-being are utilised to explore the constructs discussed above, for example life satisfaction, hedonic and eudaimonic orientations. In these studies, young people are participants in positivist psychological investigations. In Section 3.3.2, correlational studies are also used, but the authors of the studies maintain that there are questions about whether existing models reflect children's perspectives on their happiness. The aim of these studies is to ascertain if models of SWB need to be adapted, or weighted differently, in accounting for children's views. However, a particular "model" of well-being dominates, and children's views are not at the centre of the studies reviewed here. Lastly, Section 3.3.3 reviews three examples of rare studies on young people's happiness that place children's perspectives at the centre of the research questions and methods. These three sections together illustrate the predominant types of studies investigating young people's happiness, with SWB/psychological model based studies dominant.

3.3.1 Studies of young people's happiness according to SWB and psychological models of well-being

In their review of 141 studies of youth "life satisfaction", Proctor et al., (2009) state that life satisfaction measures are indicative of how well one is functioning in life: positive scores on life satisfaction measures reflecting good mental health and happiness in life, and negative scores indicate depression and unhappiness. The majority of studies under review by Proctor et al., (2009) are correlational in nature. As with adult studies of life satisfaction, they report generally positive evaluations of life satisfaction amongst children and young people; however, they note a decline in life satisfaction ratings in adolescence. Adaptive personality traits and dispositions account for the largest variations in SWB, according to the Proctor et al., (2009) review.

In contrast to these findings, The Children's Society *Good Childhood Reports*, covering the UK, report that whilst personality factors contribute towards children's self-reported SWB, they only explain a small portion of the variance (The Children's Society, 2015b). Proctor et al., maintain that consistent associations between life satisfaction and high self-esteem are also included in the area of personality variables. Demographic variables, such as socio-economic status, have had inconsistent and weak correlations with life satisfaction; again, this is in contrast to the findings of the *Good Childhood Reports*, which describe cumulative "evidence of significant links between children's subjective well-being and a range of socio-economic factors" (The Children's Society, 2015b, p. 11). As Proctor et al., (2009) report, social desirability has been criticised as being a potential confounding variable, with some studies disputing this potential difficulty. As previously discussed, there several issues with life satisfaction scales, from variation in their underlying theoretical constructs, to disagreements about what they measure and what variables in turn affect "life satisfaction".

Overall, Proctor et al., report that higher scores in life satisfaction among children and young people are associated with personality, environmental and social factors such as participating in physical and social activities, feeling safe and secure, enjoying good familial and other social relationships, as well as engaging in fewer risk-taking behaviours and witnessing or participating in aggression and violence. However, many of the studies reviewed by Proctor et al. are cross-sectional and correlational, and therefore causal pathways to increased life satisfaction are difficult to determine. The lack of cross-cultural research into young people's life satisfaction is also highlighted, with the majority of studies under review emanating from North America. The World Happiness Report 2017 documents that 80% of the variance in international happiness occurs within countries; but recent research has seen a decline in North America's happiness ratings, explained by a decrease in social support and an increased perception of corruption (Helliwell et al., 2017).

Some of the studies that have investigated young people's happiness incorporate aspects of psychological well-being (eudaimonic orientations and values), aiming to determine causes and consequences of hedonia and eudaimonia. Arguing that individuals orientate to evaluate their lives in either a hedonic way (satisfaction with life; conceptualising situations in terms of being good or bad), or a eudaimonic way (valuing achieving of personal goals and challenges, processes and skill development), Vittersø, Søholt, Hetland, Thoresen, & Røysamb (2010) propose that these orientations moderate emotions. They hypothesise that either hedonic or eudaimonic feelings are caused by how challenging a situation is; and an individual's hedonic or eudaimonic orientation predicts particular feelings dependent on this. They argue that hedonic individuals only found happiness in non-challenging situations, whereas eudaimonic oriented people found happiness from being challenged. However, these findings are based in part on simple puzzle challenges, and not on real life challenging experiences. Vittersø et al., (2010) argue that during challenges, happiness is reduced, and that when experiencing difficult times, life satisfaction is not related to positive emotions. The authors admit that theorising hedonic well-being in this way is limited, and there is still much to be understood about emotions in hedonism.

Huta (2012) investigated parenting behaviours and subsequent pursuits of eudaimonia and hedonia in the parents' children in order to try and understand potential roots of hedonia and eudaimonia in young people. Two studies with undergraduate participants assessed their hedonic and eudaimonic motives for activities, including a self-report measure of their parents' behaviour. In the second study, Huta asked participants how much their parents had verbally endorsed or role-modelled eudaimonia and hedonia; and assessed how much well-being the participants derived from eudaimonia and hedonia. Results showed that parents who were both demanding and responsive towards their children fostered a eudaimonic orientation in their children. Huta claims this finding concludes that, "parents will help their

children to pursue excellence if they use the authoritative parenting style [associated with placing demands on children, coupled with being responsive towards them]” (Huta, 2012, p. 52). In opposition to her hypothesis, she found that hedonia in the grown up children was unrelated to the reported responsiveness of their parents. She concludes, much as Vittersø et al., (2010) do, that root causes of hedonia are still not fully understood. She does state, however, that it is a combination of both hedonia and eudaimonia which is thought to produce the best outcomes and happiness in life. It is clear that Huta values eudaimonic parenting: placing demands, visions and challenges on children in order for them to “choose a path of excellence” in life (Huta, 2012, p. 53). This preference for eudaimonic parenting extends to parents’ role-modelling eudaimonic behaviours (rather than simply verbally endorsing them) in the second study of the paper, as it assisted the participants in deriving their own well-being from both hedonic and eudaimonic pursuits. Perhaps because of the uncertainty surrounding understanding hedonism fully, Huta (2012) suggests that its roots may be genetic, whereas eudaimonism is put forth as being sensitive to the environment. Given the retrospective character of the study, and reliance upon self-report measures, it is difficult to judge whether this is true.

From the three studies reviewed in this section, it can be surmised that attempting to measure young people’s happiness through the SWB model of happiness (emphasising life satisfaction) and/or through the psychological model of happiness (favouring eudaimonic behaviours and orientations) leaves much unexplained. Life satisfaction studies have been used as a proxy for understanding the extent to which young people are functioning, achieving good health and happiness. However, explanations of variance in SWB are inconsistent and what underpins achieving higher “life satisfaction” is still largely unexplained, with on-going issues of measurement validity. Studies utilising the psychological model to investigate young people’s happiness similarly fall short: they are

unable to account for emotions, and hedonia in particular is not understood either in its root causes or in its effect on one's life. Trying to capture young people's happiness within either of the two models is therefore unsatisfactory.

3.3.2. Incorporating young people's own conceptualisations of happiness and well-being into existing models

A few studies have begun to incorporate young people's views of happiness into existing models of well-being and happiness. Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) questioned the extent and validity of whether predominant adult conceptualisations of SWB aligned with children's conceptualisations of SWB. They concluded from a study with children aged 8-17 that there are three subdomains of child SWB: life satisfaction, positive affect, and meaning and purpose (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2014, p. 211). However, there are several important factors to consider when reviewing these findings. Firstly, children were only asked questions about their subjective wellbeing that already aligned with existing constructs of SWB (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of these). Secondly, when children discussed negative affect, their comments were put aside since the authors wanted their study to focus solely on positive aspects of mental health, and regarded expressions of negative affect and evaluations as outside of this construction. Thirdly, whenever children mentioned anything that was external to the three subdomains of child SWB, these were excluded because they did not fit into this model. Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) do not include details of how much was excluded that did not fit into their categories. Subsequent cognitive interviews conducted to test the construct revealed a clear difference in understanding of certain words and phrases between children who were below the age of 12, and those who were 12 and above. It is not clear from the paper how the authors resolved the issue of age-related comprehension, which tended towards older children possessing the ability to think in a more abstract way than the younger children when considering their responses.

As part of their development of a new measure of child SWB that incorporates children's qualitative answers to questions relating to well-being, Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) initially conducted a review of existing measures of child SWB, including life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, meaning and purpose and self-report. This search yielded 92 individual measures of child SWB, from which they obtained author permission to review and include 64 separate tools of measuring child SWB in their paper. The vast number of separate scales, some of which have been discussed further in this section, indicate several things. Firstly, the lack of agreement amongst researchers as to what child subjective well-being actually is, and secondly, how best to measure it. These tools are overwhelmingly adult led measures of conceptualising child well-being and happiness. Recently, some criticisms have emerged in the literature of measuring young people's well-being through participants ranking pre-determined constructs of well-being, which do not allow their own points of view on their SWB to be heard or considered (Backman, 2016; Garcia & Sikström, 2013).

The second study reviewed here was conducted by Fernandes et al., (2013). The authors set out to construct an index of child well-being that was weighted according to children's opinions. This Portuguese study of almost 1000 parent and child pairs was grounded in the normative framework of principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development [four systems in which an individual develops from being limited to the innermost microsystem to eventually including the outer macrosystem] (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, cited in Fernandes et al., 2013). The children in the study were between ages 8-13. Fernandes et al., (2013) focus on the microsystem level of development, which states that the most important factors in children's development are key indicators of family, neighbourhood, school, health, and personal characteristics. The authors divided these up into "interaction dimensions" (for example social relations and health behaviours), "context dimensions" (such as material well-

being and the neighbourhood), and a “personal characteristic dimension” (consisting of physical and psychological behaviours), although they concede that aspects of these dimensions interact with each other. Parents rated how important indices of these dimensions were to their lives and how happy they thought their child was. Children then rated their own happiness in this way. In contrast to the findings of Lopez-Perez and Wilson (2015), Fernandes et al., (2013) found that children rated their own happiness higher than parents rated their happiness: in either case, clear discrepancies exist between parents’ and children’s ratings of their happiness. Incorporating the children’s importance ratings of well-being indices into their model, the authors argue that it is parental related variables that most influence child well-being, specifically both parents’ level of education, and father’s employment status.

Fernandes et al., (2013) claim that the procedure they have adopted in developing their weighted multidimensional index of child well-being addresses two criticisms often raised in assessing child well-being. Firstly, the lack of involvement of children in the measurement of their well-being, and, secondly, a failure to consider the relative importance that children ascribe to different aspects of their well-being. Notwithstanding these claims, the children in Fernandes’ et al., (2013) were consulted last in this process, not first, after the use of a well-being model drawn from the literature, then their parents’ questionnaire, and finally a questionnaire for themselves. Children’s input was confined to rating indices of well-being that they had not chosen or identified for themselves as being important for their wellbeing. The extent to which this can be seen as a true reflection of what children consider important aspects to their well-being relative to other aspects, as Fernandes et al., (2013, p. 817) claim, is highly debatable.

Studies such as those conducted by Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) and Fernandes et al., (2013) take into account children’s views on their happiness and well-being but only in a

prescribed and model-driven way. Children do not freely voice from their own perspective what happiness is for them; the emphasis is rather on incorporating aspects of their views that fit within existing paradigms of young people's well-being and happiness.

3.3.3 Studies of young people's happiness using their own conceptualisations of well-being

Within psychology, the tendency to adopt adult constructed measurements to investigate the meanings children attribute to thinking about themselves (for example, their self-concept) has received criticism (Tatlow-Golden & Guerin, 2017). Limited studies exist on young people's happiness that take children's own points of view as the main focus of the research. Some of the very few are reviewed in this section.

Backman (2016) has argued that recent studies of child well-being and happiness stress the importance of incorporating the views of children to advance knowledge in this area, but that adolescent voices are rarely listened to. In her study of Swedish adolescents' perceptions of well-being, 200 students aged between 12 and 16 engaged in written reflections completing two sentences. Firstly, "Now I will tell you about one time when I had a good time in school, it was..." and secondly, "If I were to decide how to make the school the best place for learning I would like to..." with the intention that these two sentences would encompass "present and wished-for future positive experiences" (Backman, 2016, p. 1551). Backman was interested in uncovering bi-directional crossover perceptions of SWB for young people. Reviewing her findings in the light of previous literature, she illustrated that young people perceived bi-directional crossovers in five key areas. Firstly, there were crossovers between happiness and pro-social behaviour; secondly between their own happiness and others' happiness; thirdly between happiness and learning; fourthly between happiness and school engagement; lastly, between happiness and subject/content of lesson. As well as contributing to the literature on adolescent happiness, particularly within the school context, Backman argues that her research demonstrates that young people are "trustworthy" informants on their

own subjective well-being and supports calls from international organisations that children should contribute their own perspectives towards ideas about their development. This study is a promising start in taking children's views on happiness seriously, although the research questions and confines of the study are restricted to identifying "crossovers" of well-being within the school learning context.

Two small Irish studies with children researched their views on happiness. In the first, forty-three children aged 8-12, drawn from two schools in Ireland, participated in a study in order to understand their conceptualisation of well-being (Nic Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2006).

Through photographing and categorising photographs with the help of researchers, children formed an integrated and connected representation of their lives and well-being. The categories of photographs that emerged from the study revealed that "people I love the most" accounted for 28% of the photographs, followed by "activities" (18%), "food and drink" (17.2%), "animals/pets" (12.8%), "nature and geography" (10.8%), "family" (8.4%), "house/where I live" (4.8%), "school" (2.8%), and "sleep" (2%). Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2006) recount that the children in this study found it challenging to discuss relationships between the categories, because they felt that they were all related to one another. This simple study of younger children's conceptualisations of well-being placed children's views at the centre of the research. It demonstrates that young children are able to think about what is important to their well-being, and to illustrate these concepts in a visual way. Despite its limitations in scope, it provides an example of child-led ways to understand what aspects of well-being are important to children.

A second small (31 participants) Irish study aimed at exploring young adolescents' (aged 12-13) interpretation of the words "healthy" and "happy" drew on a grounded theory approach, utilising semi-structured interviews, which were subsequently thematically analysed (O'Higgins, Sixsmith, & Nic Gabhainn, 2010). As they were exploring two concepts, the

researchers found that children linked the concepts in their responses. Emerging themes from the happiness questions revealed that happiness was broadly associated with doing things, and being with people. Strong social relations with family and friends were integral to the young people's happiness; making their friends happy was also important to them. O'Higgins et al., (2010) revealed gender differences: girls were more likely than boys to express feelings of resentment at being treated as a younger child by their family. They also found that only boys talked of looking forward to things in the future. In considering their future, young people assumed that what made them happy now would make them happy in the future, but also recognised that the future offer hold things salient to their happiness that they were yet to experience. The authors highlight the need for similar research to be conducted with different groups of young people, including group-based data collection and a wider age range, and stress the importance of ensuring that the methods and analyses reflect the perspectives of young people.

O'Higgins et al.'s (2010) study reveals that young people's understanding of their happiness is different from existing models of happiness. The importance of doing things and the complexities in thinking about the future and how this is connected with their present happiness are absent from SWB and psychological models of happiness and well-being. They did not have scope within their study to explore the meanings of the happiness themes generated by the young people in great depth, but there are clear indications that this is a fruitful area of investigation in order to understand what counts as happiness for young people, and how it is experienced. The authors call for further research with different age groups, using a combination of methods that are interesting for young people to engage with, and analysis that prioritise young people's voices on their happiness. This is at the core of the research that this thesis reports.

The importance of doing things and of complexities in thinking about the future and how this is connected with their present happiness is absent from SWB and psychological models of happiness and well-being. O'Higgins et al., (2010) do not have the scope within this study to explore the meanings of the happiness themes generated by the young people in great depth, but there are clear indications that this is a fruitful area of study in order to understand what counts as happiness for young people, and how it is experienced. The authors' call for further research with different age groups, using a combination of methods that are interesting for young people to engage with, and analyses that prioritise young people's voices on their happiness at the core of the research is one which this thesis aims to commit to.

Chaplin (2009) investigated what makes children and adolescents happy, and whether the sources of happiness varied by age across childhood (ages 8/9; 13/13; 16/18). She highlights that previous research has concentrated on "how happy" people are, rather than "what" makes them happy. As discussed above, much research on happiness has been interested in identifying correlations with happiness, which Chaplin argues can give useful information about the characteristics of happier people but does not provide richer understandings of aspects of life that contribute to children's happiness. "How happy are you?" research is also questionnaire-based, and this may not be appropriate or engaging for children and young people. Chaplin (2009) asked children to write or to verbally record via a researcher their answer to the open-ended question "What makes me happy?" Content analysis revealed five themes: people and pets, achievements, material things, hobbies and sports. People and pets remained central and the most important aspects of children's happiness across the ages from 8-18. For the youngest children, hobbies were also very important. Material things were more important to those aged 12/13, and for later adolescents, achievements were more salient.

However, in considering some of the items that were grouped into "achievements", for example, perhaps children themselves would not have classified these as such: "no

homework”, “staying healthy” and “knowing nice people” all were included in the classification of “achievements”, which are arguably all more fortuitous in nature than representative of personal achievements.

Chaplin reports concerns about the high cognitive demand of this task on the younger children, and therefore conducted a second phase of the study, which was more structured. Using words and pictures of 20 items of each of the five themes described above, children created “happiness collages”, moving items from the theme boards onto their own happiness board, with scope to add new items of their own choosing. Chaplin reports that all ages of children engaged with and enjoyed this task, which had also been successfully used within an assessment of materialism in her previous research (Chaplin & John, 2007). Certainly the method has potential for understanding young people’s conceptualisation of happiness. For Chaplin though, the emphasis is more on producing a *measure* of happiness: looking at numbers of items chosen in each category, rather than a more detailed qualitative analysis. Fortunately, despite qualitative analysis not being the focus of the study, some qualitative data was recorded. It is this data which illuminates the dangers of making presumptions about quantitative findings without children also being informants on the reasons they answer in certain ways. Mobile phones, for instance, are included on the “material goods” board. In asking why mobile phones (and other material items) had been included, young people explained that they served important functions in staying connected with and building strong social relationships with others. Without this contextualising qualitative data, choosing “material items” as part of happiness collages could have been understood as material acquisitiveness and interpreted in a very different way from how young people themselves intended.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

There is still much that is not understood about children's wellbeing and happiness. Some of the gaps in knowledge and understanding arise from restricting measurement of well-being to ratings and scales. For instance, The Children's Society report that measurements of well-being vary according to the question asked (e.g. asking children to rate their "life satisfaction" versus asking them to rate their "happiness"). In 2014, the Children's Rights Director's Report for children in care or living away from home found that children agreed more about things that were associated with their unhappiness, but they did not agree what made them happy. Children revealed in an open question that they thought that what made them happy was very individual. These crucial issues are mentioned at the end of the report under the heading "Something Unexpected" (Morgan, 2014, pp. 5-6); but they remain unexplored in this and many other studies of child well-being. Further research using more open ended questions may also elicit a wide variation of responses; however, the responses will be those of the young people themselves.

The Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (an independent multi-disciplinary research centre on child well-being, funded by the Department for Education) recommends that children's voices on their well-being need to be incorporated fully into wellbeing research (Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre, 2012). This recommendation is in line with Article 12 of the United Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should participate and their views and opinions be listened to. The Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre state that this could be via survey instruments, but only if these were developed together with children, and include open ended questions for children to express their views. Sensitive qualitative approaches to understanding children's well-being can be an important route to uncovering children's voices on their well-being as opposed to adults' views, although they caution that questions are predominantly devised and analysed by adults and not children. Further support

for the inclusion of qualitative approaches to investigate children's well-being are given by Matthews et al., (2015), who argue that quantitative measurement scales of adolescent well-being can be an important tool, but should be used alongside qualitative methods, as these provide insight and enable understanding of what well-being means to young people themselves.

This literature review has criticised existing measures of happiness within subjective well-being research. It has also highlighted the difficulties to date of incorporating emotions into happiness or subjective well-being research. There is admission that it should be included, that it is important, but that current models and measures of well-being and happiness fail to capture this. With an emphasis on measurement denoting what can be included in a model, and dismissing other ways of uncovering the importance of emotions, feelings and subjectivities, happiness research in its current form will be stilted. This thesis aims to show that more qualitative approaches to investigating happiness for young people allow them to explore all aspects of what happiness means for them, and not be restricted to model-driven measurements of happiness.

Like Ahmed (2007), I also question the value-laden, privileged notions of what happiness should be that are found in this literature, and critique how social norms and expectations of happiness shape how happiness is 'known' and understood. Ahmed writes from a cultural studies perspective that what constitutes happiness may not be set in stone, and that "good" (happy) and "bad" (sad) feelings may not be so isolated from each other (Ahmed, 2007, p.10). My findings, from a qualitative psychological perspective, resonate with this, and I illustrate this within the context of how the young people in this study speak about happiness in their lives.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines how the research questions for my study developed from the literature reviewed, the theoretical lenses that have guided my research, and how this research was designed, enacted and analysed. Section 4.2 describes the development of the research questions. In Section 4.3, I explain how my work is situated at the intersection of psychology and Childhood Studies, discussing the research perspectives that have influenced my study. Section 4.4 describes the design of the study, and provides an overview of the research project. In Section 4.5, Data Collection, I explain how access was negotiated, discuss ethical considerations, introduce the participants and explain each of my data collection methods. Section 4.6 explicates in detail the processes and decisions that I made in analysing the data. Lastly, Section 4.7 summarises this chapter and briefly describes my rationale for how I planned the next three chapters of this thesis, which analyse the most important themes that emerged from this research.

4.2 DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literature review in Chapter 2 discussed how happiness is predominantly defined and understood according to the concept of subjective well-being (SWB). Psychological research on happiness is popularly dominated by models of SWB and/or Psychological well-being (see Chapter 2). This generally favours eudaimonia, which emphasises personal growth and development, and agentic choice. Modern constructions of happiness promote the agentic child, who can achieve happiness by making successful choices, achieving their potential, flourishing and excelling in all areas of their lives. Hedonia is less well understood, and like research on emotions, tends to be overlooked or downplayed in this literature.

There is still a knowledge gap in the literature on happiness that centres on young people's own perspectives. According to Silva Dias and Menezes (2014), children and adolescents are social actors who participate in society, and as such their voices should be heard, and children themselves should be actively involved in discussions about their life context. These authors further argue that research methods need to be inclusive in order to allow children to voice their thoughts and feelings about their lives. As discussed in the literature review, child-centred methods of understanding how they conceptualise their own happiness are rare. Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith's (2006) use of child photography and child interpretation of the resulting photographs indicates that when children are given an opportunity (and an interesting and age-appropriate method is used), their voices reveal a different perspective from adult-led measures of young people's happiness and well-being. Chaplin's (2009) "happiness collage" has shown good potential for use with children and adolescents in investigating happiness in an interesting and enjoyable way for participants; it is also apparent that the happiness collage method is enhanced by qualitative analysis rather than reliance on quantitative analysis.

There are unanswered questions about young people's happiness, which require uncovering the meanings they ascribe to happiness. What affects happiness from young people's point of view? How does it form part of their subjectivities, and how important is happiness to them?

The research questions of this study aim to begin to address some of these points. The study has an overarching question: *What counts as happiness for a group of young people in the second decade of the twenty-first century?*

This will be explored by addressing the following questions, which have emerged from the literature discussed above:

RQ1: What meanings are attached to happiness for young people? How do young people conceptualise happiness?

Meanings are culturally and individually sensitive. This is an opportunity to listen to what young people are saying about their own happiness, but also to critically evaluate existing theories of happiness.

RQ2: How important is happiness for young people?

Research from the *Good Childhood Report* (2012) states that approximately half a million young people in the UK experience low well-being at any one time. Is being happy important for young people? If it is important, do people need to feel happy all of the time? Huta (2012) maintains that both positive and negative emotions are important for well-being.

RQ3: How do young people understand how their happiness changes over time? In what way is happiness part of young people's past, present and expectations of the future?

Much emphasis is placed on young people to make active choices, and to achieve their potential. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) have argued that trajectories are not the same for all young people, and that their subjectivities are situated in their gender, and class. Young people's subjective well-being, or happiness, has been found to be relatively stable, but can change every three months or so (The Children's Society, 2012). Critical moments in young people's lives have an impact on their well-being. These are particular events that young people consider to have significant consequences in their lives, either at the time of the event happening, or in hindsight (Henderson et al., 2007, p. 20). Additionally research in psychology highlights how important *changing* values and circumstances are in people's subjective well-being (Kasser et al., 2014). This will be explored by asking young people to think about whether their happiness has changed over time.

4.3 SITUATING THE STUDY

In tracing the ways in which psychology has regarded children in research, as “subjects, objects or participants”, Woodhead and Faulkner (2008, pp. 10-39) discuss the traditional psychological disciplinary-related expectations of the “scientific paradigm” (objective, hypothesis testing, reductionist: the *logico-deductive* approach also criticised by Glaser and Strauss, 1967)). This paradigm has drawn considerable criticism in the context of researching children (both from within and outside of psychology) for how it constructs the child, the role this type of research plays in regulating children’s lives (for example, its emphasis on age-related developmental expectations and milestones), and for its failure fully to respect ethical considerations in researching with children (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008, pp. 11-14). Nonetheless, these authors are clear that psychology has significantly and importantly contributed to knowledge of child development, understanding of children as ‘social actors in cultural contexts’ and as active members of the whole of society including their changing status within psychological research. Childhood Studies is regarded as evolving from “sociological and psychological research to become an interdisciplinary field that recognises children as active, competent social beings...who can impart important messages about their experiences” (Cooper, 2014, pp. 53-54).

Where psychology continues with its ‘considerable inertia to methodological diversification’ (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008, p. 34), it remains hampered in researching children and childhoods, as a result of its historical tendency to treat the child as the “subject” of research, rather than as a participant. For psychology to progress further towards Childhood Studies, it needs to continue to embrace and legitimise more qualitative methods, render assumptions explicit, acknowledge power relationships, and engage in reflexivity. As a psychological researcher, I can identify with much that Woodhead and Faulkner describe. I came from a

positivist background and through the course of my undergraduate and master's degrees, felt increasingly uncomfortable with traditional, logico-deductive approaches to researching aspects of young people's lives, well-being and happiness. Whilst not all Childhood Studies researchers employ qualitative methods, the use of qualitative methods is recognised as being appropriate for giving children and young people a voice, so as to facilitate understanding of their experiences and lives (Clark et al., 2014). I further share the ethical view of Childhood Studies researchers who believe that "the lives of children and young people are of intrinsic interest. They should be valued and understood for what they are, rather than studied in relation to adult concerns" (Clark, Flewitt, Hammersley, & Robb, 2014, p. 2). I still regard myself as an academic psychologist, but one who has learned a little more about the criticisms of methods primarily used in psychology and about the criticisms of the psychological approach itself.

I have also been influenced by the writing of Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) in their book *Growing Up Girl*. The authors maintain that the person is rooted in practices of self-invention that are psychological, sociological and cultural (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001, p. 15), and are interested in understanding the subjectivities of young people: their lived experiences. Considering how young people attach meanings to happiness through their subjectivities has the potential to provide a new insight into child well-being research.

Additionally, Kehily (2007) suggests that engaging with the cultural perspectives of young people allows us to understand how they make sense of their environments, and the energy and motivations they commit to finding meaning in their lives.

Fraser et al., (2014, p. 42) outline that research *with* children covers a broad spectrum of approaches: from those in which children carry out the research themselves to research where children are interviewed and/or provide information in ways that allow them to speak for themselves. In my study, I am the primary researcher, but it has been my aim throughout to

facilitate ways in which the young people in my study can articulate, reflect upon and discuss their views on happiness from their perspective. I aim to understand what happiness means for young people, how happiness is constructed for and by them, the context in which it is embedded into their lives, its importance to them in the present and in their visions of their future.

I aimed to select research methods that were appropriate for the age of the young people participating. These methods needed to be comprehensive enough to uncover meaning, and sensitive and broad enough for young people to explore the things that were important to how they viewed happiness. I was mindful of the ethical care and attention needs to be paid to participants and the need to adhere to sound ethical procedures.

4.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed above, there have been criticisms of the positivist approach in research with children and childhood. It has been particularly questioned whether this is adequate and appropriate for investigating ‘subjective’ experiences and beliefs (Fraser, Flewitt, & Hammersley, 2014). Fraser et al., value sensitive and flexible approaches that emphasise communication and research in more naturalistic environments than controlled laboratory environments; and they emphasise the need to be aware and reflexive as a researcher of one’s influence in shaping the research at all stages of the process. This approach still remains scientific in a broader sense: questioning, rigorous, and systematic.

I wanted to examine young people’s happiness from several perspectives. Firstly, what is happiness; how do young people think about happiness? Secondly, it is presumed that it is important (Joshani & Weijers, 2014; Roberts, 2015) and a goal for everyone, but this is

within certain parameters – is it important to young people and in what ways is it expressed? Lastly, I wanted to focus on the temporality of happiness. I wanted to explore whether and in what ways young people’s happiness changed over time, and whether it formed part of their visions of the future. Understanding subjective experiences and beliefs lends itself to a case study approach, in which it is possible to explore multifaceted aspects, their individual nature, as well as the similarities they share with other cases (Hammersley, 2014, p. 112).

Forty-two young people aged 13-16 participated in the study. This age group was chosen because studies have shown that subjective well-being or happiness declines steadily from around the age of 12/13 to around 15 and then begins to rise again at 16 (e.g. The Children's Society, 2012). Young people over the age of twelve are also able to think abstractly, and are cognitively and emotionally able to recognise their emotional states (Chaplin & John, 2007). The participants were recruited via negotiated access with a school in south central England. Further details of participants and recruitment are described in more detail below.

I planned the collection of data in such a way that it would become increasingly detailed and rich, taking place over a lengthy period of time and using different methods. I felt that the study would benefit from open ended *happiness questionnaires* on young people’s associations with happiness as a starting point. At the broadest level, happiness questionnaires would provide an overview of aspects of happiness for young people. These were followed up with *discussion groups* with young people, drawn from those who had completed the questionnaires and who had volunteered to take part in the next phase of the study. The last phase of the study was *individual interviews* with young people on their experiences of happiness. This combination of methods and case studies helped to build up the knowledge about subjective experiences and understanding of happiness for the group of young people participating in my study (Hammersley, 2014, p. 113). These methods are described in more detail in Section 4.5 below.

The research design also encompasses the processes of data analysis used to answer the research questions generated. Underlying assumptions of the nature and importance of the topic area may need to be explored, and the research proposed should be “viable” in scope given its particular parameters and resources available to answer the research questions (Hammersley, 2014, p. 108). Modification of projects as they progress is to be expected.

I have outlined how much research on children’s happiness and subjective well-being has primarily been conducted following logico-deductive approaches to date; and that there is a need to take a qualitative inductive approach, which avoids imposing a pre-existing theoretical perspective on the research questions and data collection and analysis (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 361). Some qualitative research has been done, as in some of the work by the Children’s Society, but it quickly moved to large scale, quantitative methods in order to discover associations with other variables, as described in the literature review.

Qualitative research is concerned with the qualities of what is being investigated, being able to describe and uncover these; focussing on meanings rather than behaviour (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). It mostly studies people in their natural environments and is more concerned with identifying processes than predicting outcomes. The emphasis is on uncovering “meaning for participants” (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 370), aiming to understand how participants understand their experience. Qualitative research is concerned with the qualities of what is being investigated, being able to describe and uncover it; focussing on meanings rather than behaviour (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). It mostly studies people in their natural environments and is more concerned with identifying processes than predicting outcomes. Grounded theory methods emphasise uncovering “meaning for participants” (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009, p. 370), aiming to understand how participants understand their experience. A broad grounded theory approach was one that most resonated with my data and for investigating the meaning of happiness for

young people. However, there is not just one way of doing grounded theory, and there are also limitations to these (discussed below); therefore I have used elements and principles of grounded theory that were most of use to this study; these are discussed in Section 4.6 Data Analysis below.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

4.5.1 The Research Context and Negotiating Access

I met with a teacher of humanities at a larger than average secondary school and outlined the proposed study orally and in written form. Broad permission for the study was subsequently granted by the school and by the Head of Department. I have an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Certificate (DBS) certificate, which is a safeguarding pre-requisite of working with children in schools.

It was agreed that the first part of the study (the happiness questionnaires) would be made available to psychology and sociology students in school years 9 and 10 who wished to participate. Those who volunteered to take part obtained written consent from their parents to do so, and were unable to participate if they did not have parental consent on the dates of data collection. Students themselves also gave written consent, and I introduced and gained verbal consent at each phase of data collection. The happiness questionnaires were completed in their usual lesson time, with the class teacher and me present to answer questions and queries. The school subsequently gave permission for the next phases of the study, the discussion groups and individual interviews. Psychology and sociology students (now in school years 10 and 11) were asked anew if they wished to participate in this phase of the study, and those who volunteered obtained new written parental consent. The school agreed to the discussion groups, but insisted that they were conducted in a room with a teacher or senior member of

staff present. This staff member was not part of the data collection, but was rather engaged in their own work within eyesight and earshot of the discussion. Inherent in conducting my research within the school environment were the power relationships that exist within the school. These form part of what Fraser, Flewitt & Hammersley (2014, p.47) described as the “political context” of the research space. Power relationships within the school are explicitly and implicitly present, and as a researcher conducting my research in the school, I was very mindful of entering this political environment. The Year 10 discussion group took place at the back of a classroom in which a teacher was working, so that we were “supervised”. The Year 11 discussion group took place within the staff room, within an assistant present and other teachers entering and leaving the room. We created a space for the group by moving the teacher’s chairs around a small table, and having to move some of their boxes of school paperwork and belongings to do so. Talking in a space that was definitely not “for them” and within earshot of adult/teacher others, to an outside researcher was not ideal, and could well have inhibited the young people in having the freedom to be able to express things as they would have liked.

4.5.2 Meeting Ethical Considerations

All aspects of this project were guided by the ethical principles outlined in the *Code of Human Research Ethics* (British Psychological Society, 2014) and those promoted by the Research Ethics Committee (HPMEC) of the Open University.

- Specifically, the *principle of respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities* was observed by developing and following thorough procedures for valid consent (gaining informed consent from the school, parents or guardians of participants and participants themselves); confidentiality (ensuring that all data collected was securely stored in digital form and that any paper responses

were kept locked securely); anonymity (providing participants with pseudonyms so that they cannot be identified); fair treatment (ensuring that all participants are treated fairly and equally by the researcher during and after data collection) and due process (following protocols for consent, data collection and debriefing of participants). As the researcher, I made efforts to respect all individual differences and explain the nature of the research to all parties involved.

- The principle of *scientific integrity* was maintained by a well-designed and rigorously reviewed research protocol and process, including a rationale for the study, its methodology, mode of data analysis and dissemination of results (which I expect to include thesis submission, conference presentation, and journal paper production). I have engaged in self-reflection as recommended and recording of my role in the research process and was always be aware of my personal and professional responsibilities.
- The principle of *maximising benefit and minimising harm* to participants was upheld *by considering the research from the participants' own point of view and ensuring that the risk of harm was no greater than in ordinary life*. I met this by selecting research methodologies that are age-appropriate and designed to be of interest and engaging for participants, as well as being appropriate to the research questions. I spoke with participants about the research process; and, after the happiness questionnaire data completion, engaged in a Q&A session with the students about research in general, to contribute to their own learning about social science research methods.
- There was no *deception* involved in any aspect of the proposed study.
- The principle of *valid consent* was upheld. I also verbally introduced and explained each stage of the study, in addition to gaining written consent. Participants who chose

to participate in the discussion groups/interviews completed separate consent forms.

Phases 2 and 3 involved audio recordings of participants' interviews. This was communicated clearly to participants, and full rights of withdrawal and requests to have data deleted from the study was honoured within a time scale agreed with the teacher, the date of which was to be communicated to participants at consent stage.

Participants were provided with contact details for me and my supervisor.

- I was aware that although the research topic of young people's happiness does not directly seek to investigate sensitive issues described in the Code (sexual behaviour, legal or political behaviour, experience of violence, gender or ethnicity), these subjects may be broached or disclosed by participants as part of their responses to research questions. I undertook to inform participants that if there are indications of their vulnerability and danger to themselves or others, that I have a duty to ensure that appropriate adults are informed and that the research will stop at that point. One of the questionnaires completed on the first day indicated that a young person had been self-harming and wanted "nothingness", to "go away" and "withdrawal from life in general". Although he had written that the self-harming had now stopped, this questionnaire was clearly very concerning. I spoke with the teacher and asked to speak with the young person to let them know that I needed to tell appropriate people within the school. The school nurse and the school safeguarding team were also informed and questioned me on what had happened and how this information had come to light. When I met with him, I thanked him for taking part in the study and said that I had a duty of care to participants in the study if I read anything that raised concerns about the welfare or safety of young people. I said that when I read what he had written, I was concerned and that I had to break confidentiality and to tell someone within the school that could help him. The school nurse would be informed,

the people who would be told would be kept to a minimum, and would only be people who could support and help. He was not angry as I explained this, and said that he understood. I asked if he was OK, and he said that he was. I then asked if there was anything that he wanted to ask me or tell me. He said that they had been given a CAMHS referral by the school but it was a 20 week waiting list and he was still waiting for the first appointment. I said that people would do their best to get help for him, and he looked slightly relieved but uncertain. I thanked him again and he left.

4.5.3 The Research Participants

There were twelve Year-9 students (3 boys, 9 girls) and 28 Year-10 students (12 boys, 15 girls, 1 self-identified as both) who participated in the first phase of the study (the happiness questionnaires). Table 2 below details provides sample information, including pseudonyms, gender, ethnicity and which phase of the study they participated in.

Table 2: Participant Sample Information

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age and School Year at questionnaire completion	Ethnicity*	Discussion Group School Year	Individual Interview
Sharina	Female	15, Year 10	Bangladeshi		
Gary	Male	15, Year 10	White British		
Will	Male	15, Year 10	White British		
Andrew	Male	15, Year 10	White and Black African		
Daniel	Male	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	✓
Lori	Female	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	
Gemma	Female	14, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	
Marcia	Female	15, Year 10	White British		
Becky	Female	15, Year 10	White British		
Louisa	Female	15, Year 10	White British		
Harry	Male	13, Year 9	White British		
Ella	Female	14, Year 9	White British	✓ Year 10	
Alex	Female	14, Year 9	White British		
Rachel	Female	13, Year 9	White British	✓ Year 10	✓

Michelle	Female	14, Year 10	White Lithuanian		
Rafeeqa	Female	15, Year 10	Pakistani		
SC	Male	15, Year 10	Black British		
Isabelle	Female	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	
Madeline	Female	14, Year 9	White British		
Bethany	Female	14, Year 9	White British		
Marie	Female	14, Year 10	White British		
Ryan	Male	15, Year 10	Black British African		
Nicole	Female	15, Year 10	White British		
Jordan	Male	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	✓
Daman	Male	14, Year 9	Bangladeshi		
Rehanah	Female	14, Year 9	Pakistani		
Norah	Female	14, Year 9	White and Black Caribbean	✓ Year 10	✓
Sophie	Female	14, Year 9	White British	✓ Year 10	
Jake	Male	15, Year 10	White British		
Paige	Female	15, Year 10	White British		
Holly	Female	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	
Georgia	Both	15, Year 10	White British		
Amar	Male	15, Year 10	Pakistani		
YM	Male	15, Year 10	Black African		
Grace	Female	15, Year 10	Black African		
Mia	Female	15, Year 10	White British	✓ Year 11	
Brandon	Male	15, Year 10	White British		
Samuel	Male	15, Year 10	Black Caribbean		
Oliver	Male	13, Year 9	White British		
Daisy	Female	14, Year 9	Black African	✓ Year 10	
Olivia	Female	Not completed questionnaire	White British	✓ Year 10	
Emily	Female	Not completed questionnaire	White British	✓ Year 11	

*Participants were asked to select their ethnic group or background (see Appendix I)

All participants were given pseudonyms by using randomly chosen popular baby name lists and culturally appropriate names from years around when would have been born. I decided not to use any nicknames written on the questionnaires of those young people as they could still be identified, so I used random two letters included in the nickname.

Discussion groups following up on emerging themes from the happiness questionnaires were held six months later, when the students had moved to the next school year.

Ella, Rachel, Norah, Sophie and Daisy had all completed the happiness questionnaires and formed the Year-10 (aged 14-15) discussion group, together with Olivia, who hadn't previously completed the questionnaire.

Lori, Gemma, Isabelle, Jordan, Holly, Mia and Daniel had completed the happiness questionnaires and formed the Year-11 (aged 15-16) discussion group, together with Emily, who had not previously completed the questionnaire.

Individual interviews were held in the weeks immediately following the discussion groups, as this fitted in with the school timetable. Norah and Rachel from Year 10, and Jordan and Daniel from Year 11 were the interviewees.

4.5.4 Methods of Data Collection

Happiness Questionnaires

Participants completed happiness questionnaires (See Appendix I), the first page of which outlined the study, provided a space for written consent, and then asked for demographic information. At the first point of questionnaire data collection (Year 10 children), a further question was included:

How well off (money and possessions) do you think that you and your family are in comparison to other families that you know?

A lot less	A little bit less	About the same	A little bit more	A lot more
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Similar perceptions of socio economic status where participants are asked to indicate how much money their family has in comparison to others have been used, for example young people rating own versus peers' money and possessions with a ratings ladder used by Kasser et al., (2014). Similarly, The *Good Childhood Reports* (2012; 13; 14) found that subjective well-being in children is less affected by how rich or poor young people feel (unless their family is living in severely restrained or deprived economic circumstances), but how much young people feel they have *in comparison* to others. Children who felt that they were poorer than their friends had lower well-being; children who felt they had about the same had higher well-being (The Children's Society, 2014b). The school lies within the top 30% of the Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) (denoting the smallest geographical area for reporting population statistics) of the most deprived areas of England 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). In designing the questionnaires, I wanted to be able to capture information that could illuminate or contextualise findings, hence the inclusion of this question.

However, this question proved to be uncomfortable for some of the Muslim young people in the class to answer (see Appendix IV), and I therefore removed it before the Year 9s completed the questionnaire. I am very grateful to the two young people who met with me to explain how they were uncomfortable with the question: that consideration of accumulation of personal wealth and possessions particularly in relation to other families is not part of their culture. Bucknall (2014) considers children and young people's silence and silent voices in the research process. She emphasises that when children and young people are silent in response, it is important that these silences are recognised and listened to. Sometimes it is the researcher's actions that are responsible for the silences, as I learned from the inclusion of this question within the happiness questionnaires. Bucknall (2014, pp.74-75) argues that whilst it may not always be possible to interpret silences, silent voices, from non-response to

questionnaire items, to interview silences should not be ignored. I learned about the cultural and religious appropriateness of including such questions in my research. However, it also raises the question of the religious representation and response rates of all children in large data sets that have included similar items (see the *Good Childhood Reports* 2012; 13; 14).

With conflicting research on whether social economic and family demographics are associated with young people's subjective well-being (e.g., The Children's Society, 2015b; Proctor, Linely & Maltby, 2009), I collected this information as well as the open ended qualitative approach of the questionnaires. This was a case of not ruling things out that might be relevant. Hammersley notes that within Childhood Studies research, sometimes strategies are combined that do not reflect a truly strict divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches, and that combining approaches is becoming more popular and gaining research recognition (Hammersley, 2014, pp. 119-120). However, when I came to analyse the data from the questionnaires, many items/aspects were only mentioned by one person, and the range of things included on the happiness maps was vast, and the sample size relatively small in comparison. However, I would argue that the qualitative nature of the data enables me to explore issues in more detail than reliance upon quantitative statistics would have allowed.

After collecting demographic information, the questionnaire asked participants to write down anything that they associated with being happy, with an indication that this might include consideration of: people, pets, activities, possessions, hobbies, achievements, places (these are broad categories that have been used in semi-qualitative research with children that investigated happiness and materialism, such as Chaplin and John, 2007). Unlike Chaplin and John's method, examples of the categories were not given, in order for the participants to have the freedom to think of what matters to them.

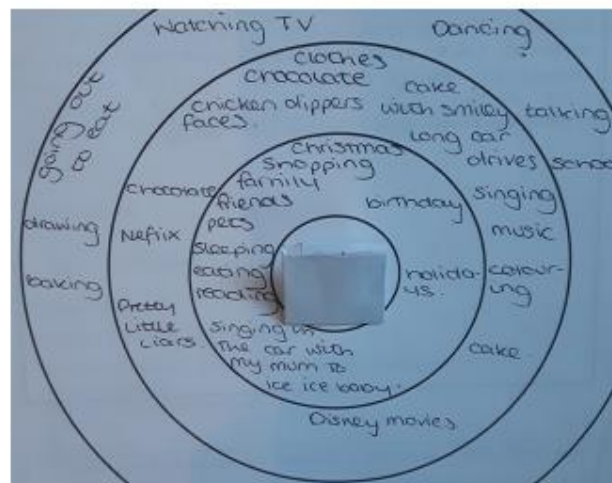
The Happiness Map

Participants were then invited to complete a happiness map, which I designed for this study. They could use the words or phrases associated with happiness they had written as an aide, adding or removing others as they wished. Maps and collages have been used successfully to identify aspects that are important to young people (Henderson et al., 2007; Chaplin & John, 2007). The happiness map is a series of concentric circles, where they write their names at the centre. Instructions were given that the items closest to the person are those which the participant thinks are the most important to their happiness, and as items are placed further away, they indicate the relative decline in personal happiness salience, but still form part of their overall happiness. Figure 3 below illustrates a completed happiness map, with accompanying instructions.

Figure 3: Example of a Completed Happiness Map

Happiness Questionnaire: Happiness maps

"You are asked to create your own happiness map. You can use all the things you included on the previous page when you were writing about what makes you happy, or you can leave some out, or add new things if you prefer. Write your name in the centre of the map. Include the things that are MOST important to your happiness in the circles closest to you, and the things that are not quite as important to your happiness towards the outer circles."



Participants were then asked to write a few lines describing their happiness map, how it represents what happiness means to them, why things have been positioned closer or further away from them, and whether there was anything they wanted to say about any of the items

that they had included. Participants were lastly also asked if they would be willing to take part in further phases of the study, with the important caveat that they could change their mind at any point.

This questionnaire was designed to be open ended enough to begin to explore meanings of happiness for individuals qualitatively, and to elicit themes for further exploration in subsequent discussion groups.

Discussion Groups

After the initial analysis of the questionnaires had been completed, generating themes for further discussion, I had hoped to begin the discussion groups within three months. School exams and teacher sickness delayed the next part of data collection until six months after the happiness questionnaires. The aim of the discussion groups was to explore themes and questions that had emerged from the happiness questionnaires, following an iterative process of data collection and analysis. I obtained the groups' permission to audio record the discussions. I had felt that videoing discussions would be too intrusive, and that participants might be more inhibited with the visual presence of a video camera. I anticipated that these group discussion sessions would each be around an hour, and would take place in a quiet undisturbed area within the school.

I brought with me an A3 sized sheet which had the most frequently mentioned items from the happiness questionnaires written on it, spaced out across the paper: family members; friends; food; music; pets/animals; sports.

After introductions, I placed the paper in the centre of the table, explained what it represented and invited the groups to discuss each of the items in turn, asking about its importance to their happiness and in what ways it was (or was not) important. When these had all been

discussed, including asking if there was anything that they were surprised wasn't there, I asked some open-ended questions that had arisen from initial analysis of the happiness questionnaires, which were designed to explore and clarify concepts and themes: How does happiness depend on your mood? In what ways are happiness and unhappiness related to each other? How does happiness change? How does choice affect happiness? How important is happiness? What does happiness mean? How dependent is your happiness on someone or something else?

The format was the same in both of the discussion groups, but kept open enough to explore things in more depth if they arose, or to move on if there was little discussion on that topic.

At the end of each of the groups, I thanked all of the young people for taking part.

Discussion groups have been used effectively in research with young people. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) described how group discussions were useful in their own right, and as a first interview, paving the way for later individual interviews. This allowed the researchers to consider the different discursive positions taken up by the boys in different contexts (Frosh et al, 2002 p.32). It was intended that the discussion groups in my study should be within friendship groups, in order that the young people would feel comfortable speaking in front of each other. Crivello, Morrow and Wilson (2013) highlight the benefit of group discussions with young people on aspects of their lives, as they point out that ideas result from shared social processes; and the experience of being with friends can be supportive and young people may find it easier to talk in the presence of friends. Although this was largely achieved within the Year 11 group, the six girls who were able to take part within the Year 10 group were not all close friends. Bucknall (2014, pp.76-77) explains that although part of the intention of such group discussions might be to lessen the inequalities between the researcher and participants, some children and young people may not contribute their views so as not to contradict other children in the group. There was an uncomfortable atmosphere between

some of the girls in the Year 10 group that came to the fore when talking about friendships (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4, regarding Olivia and Norah). Rachel was also largely unheard within this group. My field notes written immediately after this session document: “I felt bad about the studied non-reaction from the others when Rachel spoke. It was as though no-one had spoken. She was quiet, but clearly ignored/ostracised by the others. Daisy was the most open to her of the group, but even this was negligible”. Rachel, and to some extent Norah under the intimidating stare of Olivia, could be examples of “voices that are silenced” within group discussions (Bucknall, 2014, p. 76). The difficulties were in part because of the dynamics between some of the girls (see Chapter 5), but also because they were not initially relaxed with me or in that classroom environment. In order to try to ease the situation, I brought out some chocolates that I had planned to give out at the end as a ‘thank you’. Seeing the chocolates, and particularly because at that point there had been discussion on food, brought laughter and relaxation to the group. The young people opened up more, and began to return in their own time to some of points of discussion. Learning from this, I gave the chocolates out at the beginning of the Year 11 group- but in this case, they were not needed to facilitate breaking down barriers. The dynamics of the older group, and their involvement in the topics under discussion were open and full from the beginning; the chocolates remaining largely untouched until the discussion group ended. As Frosh et al., (2002) point out, it is important to consider group dynamics, dominant peers, and the researcher’s own role in the interview process, and so careful and considered field notes and reflection formed an important part of the analysis of these phases of the study (See Section 4.6.5.4 below).

[Individual Interviews](#)

Individual interviews were intended to draw further on themes and concepts arising from the happiness questionnaires and discussion groups, to develop my analysis of young people’s

perceptions, attributed meanings and subjectivities relating to their happiness. These semi-structured interviews centred on young people's experiences of happiness. The aim was to understand the meaning of happiness for the participant as part of their whole life, and to explore temporalities of happiness: people create meanings that are personal to their own sense of history and of who they are (Hollway, W. & Jefferson, 2000), but they also draw on cultural and linguistic forms that they share. McLeod and Thomson (2009) and Kehily (2002) have discussed the usefulness of life history and biographical interviews with young people in understanding their subjectivities. These interviews would provide the participant with the opportunity to think about their experiences of happiness and discuss further their thoughts on what happiness means for them, following on from their participation in the discussion groups.

The interviews were flexible, and in-depth, using starting points that framed the participants' experiences of happiness into a three part time sequence: their previous (childhood) experiences of happiness; their present experiences of happiness; their future plans, and if and how happiness features in these.

Interwoven amongst these sequences were discussions about what affected and influenced their happiness, in order to elicit a deep and rich understanding of the personalised meanings of happiness for these participants.

Flewitt (2014, p. 137) emphasises the social nature of interviews, wherein stories are shaped and retold for different audiences. The research agenda inevitably influences the interview, and opinions and views elicited will be channelled via the questions asked by the interviewer. To some extent, interviews allow participants room to consider and reflect, to bring in past experiences and to see things anew or differently.

The questionnaires, discussion groups and individual interviews as sources of the data have all been interactional processes between myself and the young people. The data has been shaped and facilitated by the research design, by the methods employed, by the letters of consent that parents have signed, by the school environment in which it was collected, and also by me when analysing the data. I also understand that people's views, stories and understandings are continually shaped and retold. The situated, complex and contingent nature of happiness for young people unfolds during the following data analysis chapters. From a Childhood Studies perspective, the nature of childhood itself is understood to be "a culturally constructed phenomenon, which change[s] over time and place" (Montgomery, 2014, p. 125).

I had originally envisaged a dataset in which the data collected would become increasingly detailed and rich; explored over a period of time and using different methods, ending with a few case studies. What I had not anticipated, which seems obvious in hindsight, was that it might not be possible to track through time and methods individual case studies in this way. Firstly, participants were advised that their questionnaires would be anonymised and of their rights of withdrawal in line with ethical guidelines. Anonymising questionnaires would be done with the use of pseudonyms. The happiness questionnaires contained two places for participants to write their names, including in the centre of their happiness. Some participants chose to give themselves nicknames or not to include their names at all. This meant that not all the young people who volunteered for the discussion groups could be matched to a particular happiness map. Furthermore, there was longer than anticipated time between the happiness map data collection and discussion groups. The process of consent had to be obtained again. Not all of the young people in the discussion groups had completed the happiness maps. The school also wanted me to finish the data collection with the individual interviews very soon after the discussion groups, resulting in no time to analyse the

discussion group data before the interviews. All four who agreed to individual interviews had participated in the discussion groups and were happy to be interviewed, but there were clear time pressures and constraints to complete this as soon as possible.

Ultimately, I found that although elements of my initial design were not possible, I was still able to analyse across the data for broad themes and to analyse within the themes and within individual narratives (cases), as the data was rich enough to do so. It was very important to me to be systematic and rigorous in working with the data, as described in detail in Section 4.6 below.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

4.6.1 Use and adaptation of Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss developed grounded theory (GT) in sociological research in order “generate general categories and their properties for general and specific situations and problems” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 30). Grounded theorists see generated theory as constantly developing, and it is the deductions that are made from the emerging theory that inform the next theoretical sampling, in an iterative process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) were clear that it was not possible to know in advance what would emerge from the data, and what hypotheses could be made: this could only happen through the process of data collection and analysis. By allowing concepts and theories to emerge first, the researcher can remain more faithful to the data rather than forcing it to fit existing theories. Glaser and Strauss argue that the aim is to progressively build up from substantive to formal theory through comparative analysis. This generates conceptual categories and their properties, which is followed by identification of systematic relationships between them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp.35-36). Through direct gathering of data, each level of data collection and analysis informs the theoretical sampling for the next level. They argue that many studies will be needed, in

opposition to the logico-deductive approach aimed at testing hypotheses through single studies.

I too wanted to remain close to the data, to avoid making assumptions about the meanings and importance of young people's happiness. However, my approach to data analysis is informed by GT, rather than a traditional GT study. It was not my intention to develop an overarching theory of children's happiness: this was beyond the scope of this study.

Nonetheless, I hoped to go some way to address the imbalance in current children's happiness research in which young people's own perspectives are not fully heard, and to provide insights into the meaning and importance of happiness. Initially, I followed GT as described by Glaser and Strauss, trying to understand my categories and the concepts that underpinned them, asking myself questions such as "What am I seeing?" "Does what I am identifying belong to that category?" However, I soon began to question the process. For example, there were already potentially many "properties" to a potential category of "ideas of what happiness is" (see below) after coding only six questionnaires. How would my categories align? Furthermore, because I only had one study in two phases, continued iterative theoretical sampling was not possible. I found that there had been developments to grounded theory, in particular constructivist grounded theory by Kathy Charmaz, which aimed to take into account methodological developments of the latter part of the twentieth century and early 2000s.

Like Glaser and Strauss's approach, Charmaz's grounded theory is influenced by symbolic interactionism, "pragmatism informed symbolic interactionism, a theoretical perspective that assumes society, reality, and self are constructed through interaction and thus rely on language and communication. This perspective assumes that interaction is inherently *interpretive* and addresses how people create, enact, and change meanings and actions...Symbolic interactionism assumes that people can and do think about their lives and

actions rather than respond mechanically to stimuli” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 9). Understanding meaning-making and acknowledging how people construct, interact with and interpret their world resonated with what I wanted to uncover from my data.

The Charmaz version of GT is different from that of Glaser and Strauss in how it views the role and position of the researcher in relation to the data. Whereas traditional GT sees the discovery of theory from the data as distinct from the researcher, constructivist grounded theory integrates the researcher fully in this process, in their interactions with the world, people, data and analysis: “We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). In thinking about my role as a researcher, and in line with the importance of reflexivity to Childhood Studies, constructivist grounded theory seemed more appropriate than its initial form.

There are still commonalities among the several versions of GT, including between that of Charmaz and the influential version presented by Corbin and Strauss (2008). These include the simultaneous, iterative process of data collection and analysis; analysis that concentrates on actions and processes, rather than attitudes and structures; a comparative approach; the use of data to inform the development of conceptual categories; and systematic analysis aimed at producing analytic categories. If research has these features, it can be classed as a Grounded Theory study (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15).

In reflecting on the constructivist influences on Grounded Theory (e.g. those developed by Charmaz), Corbin, writing a personal reflection on her research thinking, (2008, pp.8-12) suggests that these constructions can then become knowledge, which can be shared, reviewed, and are still open to change. Tolerating ambiguity is integral to the qualitative nature of both Strauss and Corbin’s, and Charmaz’s versions of Grounded Theory. Because

the world is a complex place with complex actions and interactions, methodologies attempting to explain these will therefore also have to be complex, according to Strauss and Corbin (2008, p.8). Experiences are situated and contingent, and therefore analysis should explain processes affecting people's experiences. All experiences are located within wider social and cultural events and perspectives. Strauss and Corbin maintain some of the traditional GT principles in abstracting concepts from data in order to form the basis of analysis.

Strauss and Corbin (2008) acknowledge that methods constantly change and adapt, and it is increasingly common to combine a range of methods when analysing data; even proponents of a particular method revise and adapt their method in response to new ideas. Juliet Corbin writes with regard to formalizing a method of Grounded Theory, such as Corbin and Strauss set out in their book, "will not solve every methodological problem or respond to every contemporary philosophical argument" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 9). Nonetheless, the importance of abstracting theoretical concepts from the data is non-negotiable for Corbin. Corbin argues that it is these concepts, or "findings" which inform understanding, knowledge and discussion (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12).

Whilst I have found concepts very useful in most of my analysis, sometimes I found the process of developing them too rigid. In trying to analyse everything as a "concept", I felt that I was in danger of missing some wider point or narrative that was being made by the participants, something implicit which was emerging as important to the young people in my study. As Corbin herself notes in her reflection, "I want to emphasize that techniques and procedures are tools, not directives. No researcher should become so obsessed with following a set of coding procedures that the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12). At times I experienced tension between coding and being sensitive to the data. Corbin and Strauss are also clear that theory development should be at

the heart of grounded theory. This has been contested by Childhood Studies researchers, such as Prout and James: “We turn to the importance of empirical studies of childhood...we believe it would be a mistake to see the way forward only in terms of theoretical development. Well conducted empirical studies...are essential counterparts to theoretical work” (Prout & James, 2015, pp. 24-26). Corbin and Strauss (2008, pp. 53-54) have responded in acknowledging that ‘theory’ has fallen out of favour in preference to “lived experience” and “narrative stories” but argue that theory development is still important for explanation and development of knowledge. Other researchers setting out to use GT have also reflected on difficulties of strictly following this method. For example, Bailey and Jackson have written about their struggles with adopting specific qualitative methods that adequately allow for researchers “to capture the rich insights of participants” (Bailey & Jackson, 2003, p. 57). In using grounded theory initially in their study of home-making in lesbian couples, they experienced difficulty in getting to a “coalescence of a theoretical construct”: “Beyond the first stage of coding (using Strauss and Corbin’s method) we were concerned that we were already losing the uniqueness of each of our interviewees”. They found the process of GT frustrating as it lost a sense of how participants portrayed their stories, and fractured the data. As I have described, I too experienced similar concerns at times. I have therefore used GT methods broadly and flexibly, as I outline below. I am interested in uncovering meanings. I have been systematic, questioning and rigorous, sometimes following the development of theoretical categories and their properties, which I think of as their *qualities*, and sometimes revealing the young people’s narratives. I have combined within and cross-case analysis, enabling me to document both actions and processes of young people’s happiness and patterns of comparison and difference in their narratives of what happiness meant for them and how important happiness is.

4.6.2 Questionnaire Analysis

Initial analysis involved two readings of the questionnaires, and noting my thoughts, decisions and questions.

First reading

In the first reading, there were several questionnaires that formed what I came to think of as a ‘group’ of five boys, aged 15, from year 10, who used street slang/urban talk in their happiness maps. I needed to understand what the slang refers to, and made a note of everything that I was unsure of. The Urban Dictionary (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/>) was very useful in this respect. For example, one of these questionnaires included the following phrases, previously unknown to me:

“Barber...shape up cuzzz!” The Urban Dictionary definition of “Shape Up” is “To fix up your hairline, on the back, or side of your head. Also the front if you want it.”

“Crep” The Urban Dictionary definition of “Creps” is “Good looking trainers, likely to be wanted by rudeboys.”

I realised the much stylised words that the group of boys were using were image related (particularly to haircuts) and a certain way of writing about girls, and sexual language describing girls, for example “Galdem”, “Nips” and “Slits”.

At this stage, although this group were very interesting, including the names that three of them had decided to call themselves on the questionnaires, I did not want to go any further in analysing the data from a “group perspective” as I need to have more of an open mind at this very early stage.

I began to make a note of potential themes emerging like relationships, sports, activities, food, sleeping, effort in happiness, self-management. I also noted points to be returned to in more detail in second readings, such as:

What makes you happy doesn't always...happiness has contingencies?

I noted the breadth of topics and subjects included in the questionnaires, from things affecting mood, to the weather, experiences, faith, and things that were enjoyed like music: many different aspects of happiness. I also realised that some people who had indicated that they would like to take part in the next phase of the study had not made themselves identifiable.

I began to wonder whether it was predominantly girls, maybe older girls who were engaging in a deeper level of reflection in their thinking about happiness: considering how things or people that were associated with their happiness weren't always conducive to this, that sometimes they contributed to unhappiness or stress, that happiness could be contingent and I wrote this down as something to come back to. I thought about how I would use pseudonyms. There were some questions with these too, for example, what should I do with pseudonyms for young people who have given themselves nicknames?

Second reading

In the second reading, I thought that I needed to start with the first "level" of data, and that this should not be read in the light of identification with a particular individual. I wanted to analyse for themes across the data, as well as analyse within individual data but it was not possible to do these simultaneously.

I turned only to the page in each questionnaire where the respondents wrote things that they associated with happiness, deliberately not looking at the individual's personal information, as I didn't want to be focussed at this stage on matching up what is said to the person, in

order to try to be as neutral as possible when thinking about the themes. I know that when I come to a few of the questionnaires that I am more familiar with (e.g. the group of the boys mentioned above) that this wouldn't always be possible, but I wanted to try as much as possible to be free of other influences. For this reason, I turned the pile of questionnaires upside down so that I would not be working through them in the same order as the first reading, as it is too easy to become familiar with individuals and questionnaires in a certain order, and this can affect your thought processes and attention to the data.

I decided that I would write down everything in long hand, producing a list that contained all the words and phrases the young people associated with happiness. I needed to give myself time to think about what I was doing. With this in mind, I also decided to do the qualitative analysis before the quantitative analysis as I wanted to remain open to possibilities of interpretation: the grounded theory approach aims to avoid forcing data into existing formal theories, instead allowing concepts and categories to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 34), which aligned with my research design and aims.

I was struck as I was writing how often food, family, friends and music came up. Although I was operating within a broad grounded theory approach, I was aware of a lot of literature on young people's happiness, and realised that there were some new themes emerging in my data. Awareness of existing literature, and researchers' past and present engagement with knowledge and perspectives, is central to how constructivist grounded theory is different from the original grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). I was also struck by just how extensive and varied were the aspects of happiness mentioned in the data.

After this second reading of the questionnaires, I felt ready to set up my project for further coding and analysis in a qualitative software programme. I used NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software; QSR International Pty Ltd. Version 10, 2012.

I entered all respondents into NVivo and created demographic classifications. I transcribed all questionnaires into individual Word documents and imported all questionnaires into NVivo. I then began the process of coding the questionnaires.

Initial coding

Initial coding of the questionnaires related to questions that I asked myself of what I was seeing in the data. Firstly, how is happiness understood, how is happiness perceived, what ideas are expressed about what happiness is? These were very broad and diverse; the questionnaires generated answers that often consisted of lists. Coding these revealed that the most frequently mentioned things were family members, friends, activities/time use/sport, food, music, pets and animals.

Secondly, I identified that in section three of the questionnaire, where young people wrote descriptions and further reflections on their happiness maps, there were some themes emerging: how feelings change; changing relationships affect a change in happiness; needing to be in the right mood for some things (that are enjoyed) to make you happy- mood contingent happiness; how something/someone that is associated with happiness can also be associated with unhappiness; happiness can be contingent on people, places, and time. These were all coded as initial concepts. I also noted the language used in the happiness maps, which encompassed being both happy and unhappy.

Young people often included their experiences of happiness in the questionnaires.

Experiences were frequently denoted by verbs used as opposed to nouns, as they were often an activity. For example, "spending time with my mum", "reading". Some nouns coded as concepts could also be describing experiences for the respondent- this was difficult to tell sometimes if there was only one word.

Lastly, I noticed that sometimes young people occasionally included a future event, like going to their school prom, or a gap year after school finished. There were also choices to be made, or a perceived consequence of an action (for example, enjoying food but feeling bad if they ate too much). Sometimes these were within the *happiness map* (the concentric circles denoting most important- least important); sometimes these were within the reflection part of the happiness map (section 3), and where the young person was thinking about how the map represents what makes them happy.

This initial coding led to follow-up areas that would be explored further in the next phase of data collection. There were questions that had arisen from the questionnaire data that I wanted to discuss in more depth in the discussion groups and interviews (see Discussion Groups above). I also wanted to explore the most frequently mentioned things from the questionnaires as outlined above: Family members; friends; food; music; pets/animals; sports.

4.6.3 Representation of Young People's Voices

James (2007, p. 261) warns that it is easy to claim to include “children’s voices”, but children still continue to find their everyday voices silenced or ignored, or where they are given an opportunity to express their views, these are ignored. There is a danger in simplifying what is voiced by children: mediation and translation of children’s voices into simpler representations can alter both the original conveyed reality of children’s lives, and also how it is received as a social construction. Childhood studies researchers and children’s practitioners should make it clear as to “whose voices are being represented and by whom? Why are they being represented? And finally, what implications are there from the form these take?” (James, 2007, p. 267). When there is talk of the “child’s voice” in research, it very easily implies identification with and representation of children, and can also be a means by

which research includes marginalised groups. It can be questioned whether the “child’s voice” is given a meaningful position in such research, because of adult decisions that are made regarding the processes of how their voices are heard, and what is included of children’s voices from what is recorded (I’Anson, 2013, p. 109). The researcher’s choice of quotations from children will be made to support her or his line of argument, and these choices should be open to scrutiny. Bucknall (2014) writes that as young people are rarely involved in data analysis, it is therefore a responsibility of the researcher to ensure that that young people’s voices are represented in the analysis and interpretation of the data in a way that moves beyond notional. This does not necessarily mean that research that is not carried out by children themselves is in any way inferior, as methods should be suitable for the research task, but “all research has to be acknowledged as a process of representation, whether it is carried out by adults or by children” (James, 2007, p. 268).

The interview or discussion is an interactive process that is subject to social influences. Therefore children’s voices and perspectives in research are “standpoints” from which the research begins, and the researcher tries to understand where the children are coming from and to recognise that their positions change through time in the same way as those of adults (James, 2007, p. 269). Understanding standpoints means acknowledging the different perspectives that adults and children have (James, 2007). Bucknall (2014, p.78) also notes that young people’s views of the research itself can influence the data collection and analysis, and emphasises the importance of researchers explaining how they have developed their process of data categorisations and that there are other ways in which the data could be interpreted. In doing so, “Audiences can then decide for themselves whether or not the interpretations and conclusions offered are convincingly grounded in and supported by the data” (Bucknall, 2014, p. 79). In the explication of my reading, coding, and thematic generation, I have aimed to address these points.

Bucknall (2014) also acknowledges that as much as researchers want inclusiveness and representativeness within their research populations, there are many obstacles within the negotiation and design of the research that mean inclusivity and representativeness can be difficult to obtain. For my part, I have documented the steps that I took as far as I was able, and where I have learned lessons along the way. I have considered the extent to which those young people who participated in my research were representative of wider populations (young people in England aged 13-16 at its broadest level; young people in the particular area of England, in particular economic, social and gendered classes; those within the school; and others of their age group in the school). Although my study is inherently small scale, investigating subjective perceptions and experiences of happiness, I would still argue that there is enough “evidence” within this thesis that adequately challenges existing dominant models, that suggests alternative ways of investigating happiness, and that re-orientates the questions that need to be asked when researching young people’s happiness.

4.6.4 Analysis of Discussion group and Interviews

4.6.4.1 A Note on Transcription

The audio recordings of the discussion groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim, totalling 32 000 words. Any pauses or hesitancy in speech, or when a speaker is interrupted, are denoted with the use of “...” Laughs or other vocal expressions are denoted in square brackets. Young people’s emphasis on particular words is denoted with the use of italics. Sections of speech and excerpts from happiness maps are indented from the left by 1cm in the data analysis chapters for each person talking, at single line spacing, to distinguish from sections of analysis, which is double line spaced and not indented.

4.6.4.2 Coding

I initially engaged in line-by-line coding of the data, using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). I found the approach useful as it emphasises attention to actions, processes, what is said, what is unsaid, and what is implied (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17., p. 33-34., p. 116). I stuck closely to the data in generating provisional codes, considering how the data revealed young people's meaning-making about happiness (Charmaz, 2014, p. 100., p. 117). This initial line-by-line coding was done in Microsoft Word as focussing on actions and processes was a different way of thinking about the data than the category-coding described above, and I wanted the freedom to work intensely with the data. Using this process of coding the discussion groups and interview transcriptions enabled me to gain a richer understanding of how young people experience and describe happiness, where contradictions lie, and where things that are lightly mentioned are explored in more detail later on. Initial coding provides theoretical insights into the data and begins to unify analytical ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p. 137).

I now had initial coding of the happiness questionnaires, including areas that had been taken forward to the discussion groups, known as "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer (1969), cited in Charmaz, 2014, p. 30), where broad terms from initial data collection provide researchers with ideas and questions to investigate further, as well as the line by line coding of the discussion groups and interviews. Using this approach to code for psychological and social actions and processes helped define the ways in which things contribute to young people's happiness and enabled me to begin to unpick these questions. I returned to the sensitizing concepts and considered the extent to which they were present within the discussion groups and interview data. Some of these concepts had become prominent, and pointed towards the next stage of focussed coding. These were:

1. How happiness could be associated with unhappiness (the things that make you happy in life also can make you unhappy)
2. The sensitizing concept of ‘what does happiness mean?’ was developing as “the individual and personal nature of happiness”
3. Some aspects of “how does happiness change?”, and “how does choice affect happiness?” would be developed to conceptualise how young people envisage their future and their future happiness. In the initial line by line coding of the discussion group and interview data, it seemed to be closely allied to ‘personal identity’.

Importantly, there was also a new concept that did not arise from the questionnaire, but arose during the discussion groups and this was:

4. The emotional labour of pretending to be happy, or of faking happiness (done with the intentions of reassuring others, of making others happy, of feeling responsible for others’ happiness, and of parents’ thinking that young people’s unhappiness meant that things were much worse than they themselves felt).

As the method is grounded in the data, as patterns and potential codes of happiness properties and meanings began to appear, all of the data collected could be re-interrogated in an iterative process. This was done for each of the emerging codes.

4.4.6.3 Whole data set coding

Next, I engaged in focussed coding of the whole data set. This is a process of conceptual analysis of the data, of understanding meanings, engaging in constant comparison across the data, synthesising concepts in an iterative process (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138-140; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 35). From my analysis of the questionnaires, I had found the most frequently

mentioned things from the happiness maps, and I took these to the discussion groups to ask specifically what was it about them that was important to the young people's happiness, were they in fact important, what did they think about them, and also what did they feel was missing- what were they surprised wasn't there? These were: Family members, Friends, Food, Music, Sport, Pets. In returning to these subjects for focussed coding, I realised that it was not just "this is what young people say makes them happy: X, Y, Z", because the 40 questionnaires revealed many varied things that young people said made them happy. The coding had to focus *on what was it about them* that meant happiness for young people; what Glaser & Strauss (1967, p. 35) term the "conceptual properties" of each category, but which I thought of as their qualities.

As each potential code emerged in one section of the data, I went back through the entire data set coding for instances of it. In this way, I address Bucknall's (2014) criticism that data analysis is sometimes not representative of the wider pool of data gathered. I feel confident that the process I engaged in this was rigorous.

Using this coding process with NVivo enabled me to then generate a "query matrix" whereby I cross-referenced the most frequently mentioned things from the happiness maps (and included those in the discussion groups that were felt to be missing) with each of the conceptual properties that had been identified and coded within the data. I could then interrogate every instance of a coded category across and within the data, in this way determining representative, dominant themes, and their relationship to particular domains (if any). Where some codes/categories might only have one or two segments of data, some had many. For example, the code "bonding with others" was coded to 45 segments of data, of which 18 instances related to "family" and 13 of which related to "friends". Similarly, the code "happiness associated with unhappiness" was coded to 64 segments of data, 20 related

to “family” and 22 related to “friends”. Deeper analysis of these important themes formed the basis of the first data analysis chapter of this thesis (Chapter 5). In the second data analysis chapter (Chapter 6), I wanted to focus on young people’s experiences of happiness. I could have chosen to write about music, food, sport, rest and relaxation, including examples of each and their conceptual properties. I chose to focus on music, partly because I wanted to explore one aspect in detail, and also because I felt that this could be understood as one example of many experiences of happiness. However, I would also add to this reasoning that happiness is individual. It is therefore also important to represent young people’s stories and narratives of happiness, reflecting my position on the ontological nature of happiness as individual, contingent and temporal. Chapter 7 uses the narratives that I have selected (as experiences of happiness), illustrating this ontological nature of happiness, but each narrative of experiencing happiness is an individual story, with a sense of identity being a common thread to these narratives. I would therefore argue that being representative of the data collected is important, but it also depends on the nature of what is being researched.

In Chapter 8 (Feelings and Subjectivities), I followed up the focussed coding of “pretending to be happy”. In doing so, I began to think about young people’s feelings and subjectivities: what mattered to them, and what was affecting their happiness? Through this process of writing and analysis, I wanted strongly to highlight the points that young people themselves were most impassioned about (for example, choice and the educational system). I also wanted to consider the ways in which the young people felt that happiness was either important or not important. These seemed to be slightly different questions from “conceptual properties” of codes-categories-themes, but questions that if I did not address, I would be omitting salient and important points that the young people were making about happiness. As discussed above, these are criticisms that others too have found using grounded theory: fragmenting the

data and losing the richness and meaning of participants' stories. By maintaining flexibility in analysis, I have used parts of grounded theory that have been useful, but also sought to reveal young people's perspectives and narratives.

4.6.5.4 Memo Writing, Field Notes and Reflexivity

I also made use of memo writing in the process of data analysis. I used these memos as a way of gathering and clarifying my thoughts about the data. I documented questions, formed ideas, included data excerpts and initial and focussed coding. Some memos were more analytical, some documented processes, and some were personal reflections on my study journey. Memo writing is integral to constructivist grounded theory for many of these reasons, a space in which to think and to engage with the data in different ways (Charmaz, 2014, p. 162). I approached these memos in a freer way, not feeling constrained by "academic" writing, and this assisted me in making connections and planning next steps. Similar benefits to memo writing have been documented in research using broad constructivist grounded theory principles (Lovell, 2015, p. 1018). An example of an analytical memo in bringing together all of my thoughts on a theme is on Music (Appendix II). A further example of memos on thinking about individual narratives on happiness is one written immediately after coding Daniel's Individual Interview (Appendix III).

I also wrote field diaries in the evening after each visit to the school for data collection. In these field diaries, I described what had happened and how the data collection had gone, any difficulties encountered, and my emotions and feelings about the day. Punch (2012, p. 87) succinctly describes potential benefits of field notes in assisting researchers "to scrutinise their personal challenges and emotions in relation to the research process as well as the ways in which they may shape interpretations of the data generated...[field notes may] also assist

with transparent reflexivity”. I had not initially intended that my field notes would record my emotions and feelings, but I realise now that it was important that they did. Walkerdine et al., (2001, pp. 84-85) argue that research that is interested in people’s subjectivities (lived experiences and the ways in which people make sense of the world) must allow for the researcher to engage willingly with their conscious and unconscious thought processes. The process of self-reflexivity recognises that researchers, like everyone else, approach situations and interact with people in ways that are influenced by their own preconceptions, values and judgements (Walkerdine et al., 2001, p.85). Reflexivity is also important in being aware of one’s role in shaping the data, and needs to be made explicit in the research process (Fraser et al., 2014, p. 40). I have included an excerpt of my field diaries, describing my first day of data collection in the school, and how it came to light that there was a problem with the question on relative perception of wealth in Appendix IV. Appendix V is a reflection on considering how one of the data collection experiences brought back memories and emotions from my own teenage years. I saw connections between my experience, the data and my analysis; I recognise my role as a co-constructor of the data in this process.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have explained how my research questions developed from knowledge gaps in the existing literature on children’s subjective well-being and happiness. Much of the current literature omits children’s own perspectives and is dominated by large scale quantitative methods. My study is situated at the intersection of psychology and childhood studies and adopts a qualitative approach, which considers children as social actors who operate within social and cultural contexts.

I outlined how the methods chosen for my study were appropriate for the young people; sensitive to their perspectives, and designed to encourage thinking and talking about

happiness. I described the use of each of the methods I employed: the *happiness maps* within happiness questionnaires, the use of discussion groups, and the individual interviews. Ethical considerations have been discussed, and the research context and research participants introduced.

I have explained my approach to data analysis as being influenced by principles of Grounded Theory, but it is not a traditional Grounded Theory study that closely follows any of the several Grounded Theory methods. I outlined in detail my method of data reading, coding and analysis. I have considered the extent to which my study is representative of children's voices of those young people who participated in my research, and wider issues of representation.

There were many stories to be told about young people's happiness that emerged during the research process. I had to consider carefully which of these to tell. In doing so, I thought about aspects that were mentioned most frequently (for example relationships with family and friends, Chapter 5, and music in Chapter 6), those which represented everyday experiences and narratives of happiness (Chapter 7), and those which drew the most impassioned discussions and raised new important points about happiness (for example "choice" within education and career futures, and that young people feel under pressure to show that they are happy, Chapter 8). It is my aim to reflect the experiences and interests of the young people in my study; to produce a thesis that tells a wider story, and to prioritise aspects that feed into debates about the lives of young people in the UK. Negotiating all of these requirements is complex, and I feel it is important to acknowledge my role in the construction of these representations and reflections, as well as the different audiences with their different wants and requirements that I seek to address.

CHAPTER 5: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND HAPPINESS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of good quality relationships with family and friends has been widely acknowledged as being important to children's happiness (O'Higgins, Sixsmith, & Nic Gabhainn, 2010; *Good Childhood Reports* 2012-2016). This chapter explores the ways in which young people discussed how their family and friends were associated with their happiness across the data collected and analysed. Section 5.2 outlines quantitative findings on family and friends from forty young people's open ended happiness questionnaires. It then introduces some qualitative themes concerning these relationships that emerged from the questionnaires and happiness maps. In young people's reflection on the happiness maps, relationships with family and friends were often considered, but it became apparent that these relationships were not straightforward. There was a clear indication that young people were describing these relationships often as ones that made them both happy and unhappy. Their happiness with these relationships seemed contingent on certain things. Section 5.3 explores firstly the positive and then the more difficult aspects of family relationships for young people's happiness. In Section 5.4, young people's voices on positive and negative aspects of their friendships are revealed. Lastly, in Section 5.5, the overall findings on the importance of both family and friends articulated by the young people are considered together.

5.2 QUANTITATIVE & PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE FINDINGS ON FAMILY, FRIENDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS FROM THE HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRES

"Family" and different family members appeared more often on the happiness maps than anything else. For 33 of the 40 respondents, family in some form was in the innermost circle on their happiness maps, indicating that they were amongst the most important things that

contributed to that person's happiness. A further four young people placed family/family members in the second circle, and one person placed family on their happiness maps in the third circle. Of the two remaining young people who completed happiness maps, only one did not mention family at all, and the last wrote "When my family is happy" in her innermost circle. Sometimes family appeared across the individual happiness maps, either as "family" or as named family members in differing places of the maps. Family, and family members, were clearly very salient to young people's happiness.

Similarly, "friends" in some form featured very highly across the happiness maps, the second most frequently mentioned category after family. Friends were placed in the innermost circle by 25 of the 40 young people, in the second by ten more, and in the third circle by another one. Only four people did not mention friends, and of those one mentioned a boyfriend, indicating a romantic relationship, with one of the others including "girls".

As discussed in Chapter 3, scoring highly on life satisfaction measures has been correlated with enjoying positive relationships with family and others for children and young people (Proctor et al., 2009). Strong social relations with family and friends were found to be integral to young people's concepts of being "happy" using a grounded theory approach (O'Higgins et al., 2010). The *Good Childhood Reports* (2012-2016) found that family is the most important aspect of children's well-being. "Family" and "Friends" are two of the ten items on the Good Childhood Index (Rees et al., 2010), a measure used frequently in the *Good Childhood Reports*, compiled from consultation with children as being important to their lives. Positive, meaningful relationships with significant others are understood to be one of the basic human needs according to self-determination theory (SDT), and are essential in the nature and desire of humans to become fully adaptive and optimally functioning, which is SDT's operationalisation of organismic wellness (Niemi & Ryan, 2013), as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.

The importance of these relationships can be seen in simple activities and routines that young people associated with happiness. They represent part of the everyday fabric of family life, and were mentioned in the happiness maps.

Sharina, aged 15: I like going out for dinner with my family.

Ella, aged 14: Singing in the car with my mum to Ice Ice Baby

Amar, aged 15: Eid – brings happiness with family and friends.

Becky, aged 15: Soapbox derby – I have a really good time spending time with my dad

Mia, aged 15: Visiting my Nan

Madeline, aged 14: Being with friends

Daman, aged 14: Hanging out with friends.

In her individual interview, Norah, aged 15, described some of the things she liked doing with her friends:

Norah: Shopping

Cordelia: Mmm

Norah: Erm, like, ha- like, sleepovers...just like...going to the cinema...just like having a normal conversation...like whenever we can...like I know we're not meant to do it, but like messing around in class sometimes (smiling)...erm, stuff like that.

Cordelia: And those type of things make you happy?

Norah: Yeah

Relationships with family and friends were sometimes the first thing that young people mentioned when thinking about what made them happy. To introduce themselves at the

beginning of the discussion groups, I asked each person to say their name, age and something they liked doing that made them happy. For both groups, several of the answers centred on spending time with family (and friends):

Year 10

I'm Ella and I'm 14, er, I go to the cinema with my mum a lot, that's like, our little thing

I'm Olivia, and I'm 14, and I like looking after my sister's kids

Year 11

My name's Emily, I'm 15, and I like spending time with friends and family...that makes me happy

My name's Isabelle, I'm 15, and I like spending time with my family

I'm Gemma, I'm 15, and I like spending time with family and friends

These excerpts from the questionnaires and the follow up discussion groups align with the existing literature on the importance of close relationships for young people's happiness. However, as Demir (2013) has pointed out, research on relationships and happiness has recently thrown up new questions. Lucas, Dyrenforth and Diener (2008) have argued that studies on relationships and happiness do not adequately account for the effect sizes of the predictor (e.g. relationship related variables) on happiness/subjective well-being, with many of the effect sizes being overstated. In other words, the search to find unique predictors of happiness in relationships may be more complex than previously thought. This has raised the question as to whether the importance of social relationships to people's happiness has been overstated. Much of the existing research focuses on one relationship at a time, with

marital/dyadic adult romantic relationships receiving the most attention. Both the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 and the quotes above illustrate that family and friends are indeed important to young people's happiness, and that in some ways, these can be conceptualised as simple, straightforward relationships. However, evidence from the open ended happiness questionnaires also began to illuminate that these relationships may be qualified and contingent in the way in which they contributed to young people's happiness. For example, Becky aged 15, reflected, "Friends – most of the time I love them but sometimes I wanna slap them"; Marie, aged 14 wrote, "Things such as my family, friends and dog only make me happy when we are getting on well and they are happy"; and when family appeared in her happiness map, it was qualified with "happy family" and "calm family". Paige, aged 15 wrote, "Family and friends- I love my friends and family but sometimes they cause me sadness"; Mia, aged 15, "Spending time with friends (sometimes)"; Sharina, aged 15, "My family but only when we're not arguing or no one's angry".

For Louisa, aged 15, reflecting on her happiness map enabled her to articulate how she felt that social relationships had let her down and were not part of her conceptualisation of happiness:

I try not to rely too much on people and objects to make me happy, so I try to be alone to make myself happy, I'm the only thing I can rely on.

As the two most frequently mentioned items, discussion of "Family/family members" and "Friends" were brought to the two discussion groups in order to explore how they were both associated with and contributed to young people's happiness. As there were indications of the qualification of these relationships in the happiness questionnaires, some related questions were put to the discussion groups. These questions emerged from a preliminary reading of the reflections on the happiness maps, as potential themes to be explored. Not wanting to influence the ways in which these may be relevant to particular domains of happiness, I kept

the questions open-ended. These included asking whether and in what ways happiness and unhappiness were related to one another, whether happiness was dependent on someone or something else, and how, if at all, happiness changes. In analysing the responses to these questions (other questions are explored in Chapters 6, 7 and 8), young people articulated how family and family members, and friends, contributed both to their happiness and to their unhappiness. Part of their vocabulary on happiness included discussing unhappiness, and at times to distinguish how family and friends similarly and differentially were a part of this.

Sections 5.3 and 5.4 reveal how young people spoke about the positive and not so positive aspects of these relationships across the data from the questionnaires, discussion groups, and the individual interviews that were conducted with Jordan, Daniel, Norah and Rachel, who had all taken part in the discussion groups.

5.3 FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS

5.3.1 Positive aspects of family and young people's happiness.

Characteristics of young people's relationships with their families that positively affected their happiness were articulated in many ways. These ranged from spending time doing things together to feelings of gratitude for the things that family did for young people. Sometimes this gratitude was expressed as a recognition of a family's time and effort in raising them, for example, "YM" (boy, aged 15) wrote on his happiness questionnaire:

Family means a lot as they brought me up.

In his individual interview, Jordan, aged 16, discussed his gratitude towards his mother, for himself and for his siblings, and how this made him happy:

Because it's not just my mum that makes me happy, it's everything she *does* for me, my sister, my older brother and my younger brother...it's just quite *amazing*. Like, we're not the most well-off family, but I always get everything I want...which...I know is quite a clichéd thing to say, but it's *true*...Um, but...yeah, so obviously I just l-love her being there, which is great.

At other times, young people's feelings of gratitude towards their family was more implicit, for example making of favourite food, as mentioned by two of the girls:

Holly: I came home one day to spaghetti bolognese and I'd had a really bad day, and it just made it all better

Norah: Oh I like my sweetcorn [laughter from others]. I'll eat a tin of sweetcorn. Like my mum buys Green Giant and I'd go home, and I'd have a tin of sweetcorn waiting when I get in and I'll just eat the whole thing [others laughing]

Spending time with family is something which was often talked about right across the data in terms of *making* young people happy. Happiness can sometimes be produced for young people; it is a feeling and a state that can be engendered by spending time together with their family. The following excerpts illustrate this.

In his individual interview, Daniel (aged 16) described how his family, as well as his girlfriend, made him feel:

Erm, and my family are really...happy...producing...and makes me smile every day

Amar, aged 15, wrote in his reflection on his happiness map, "Family – brings happiness when I'm with them". Mia, aged 15, included "family time" in the innermost circle of her happiness map, representing something that she considered amongst as most important to her happiness.

5.3.1.1 Feelings of close attachments

Wanting to have a close relationship with family members was important to many young people's happiness. Feelings of close love and attachments and renewal of family bonds permeated their talk on happiness and family relationships.

In her questionnaire, Lori, aged 15, wrote:

The things that make me happiest are my family and my pets mainly. They make me happy because I love them

Harry, aged 13, reflected:

My family is the main part in my life but I also love nature, my friends and my pets.

In his individual interview, after talking about how his father left when he was quite young, and that he wasn't very close to him, Jordan (aged 16) revealed the closeness of the relationship he had with his mother. It is implicit that part of the reason he has a close relationship is because she has always been there for him, whereas others haven't:

I'm very close to my mum, and she makes me happiest...of *all*, because she's just like my...role model, if that makes sense. She- she's just the one that's *always* been there.

Jordan often talked to his mum about what he was doing and about what he wanted to do in the future. His relationship with his mother at the time of the interview was one of love and friendship, where she was both his confidante and advisor. Norah also talked about how family relationships were important to her, illustrating attachments across the generations and a sense of belonging to a wider family:

Norah: Erm...I dunno really...Like, spending time with my little brother makes me happy as well. Cause...It's just something that we do together, like he would...we'll go to the cinema together when we were like younger, but my mum would come with us. So that's something that I would do with my brother. And over the years, like him getting older, I'd take him out shopping and we'd do stuff together- that makes me feel happy cause I'm getting to spend time with him. So...I've been ...like seeing family that I don't get to see that often, that makes me feel happy as well.

Cordelia: Mmm. And what is it about that that makes you happy?

Norah: I dunno...it's just that feeling like when like you haven't seen them in ages and then you get to go and see them and you're catching up with all your cousins, and your aunties and that.

Cordelia: Mmm. So being part of a bigger family and...

Norah: Yeah

The importance of intergenerational family connectedness to Norah's happiness was further revealed in the Year 10 discussion group:

Norah: Just like dolls in my room...like china dolls...my friends don't like them, but they've been passed down like all...like the parents to their children...that makes me happy, seeing 'em

Daisy: Are you gonna pass them on to your children?

Norah: Cos there's like my Nan-like my Gran, and my Great Nan and my Mum's mum, and all their family and it...so that makes me happy like thinking that I got...one part of them looking at me...like making sure that...

Daisy: Aww

Norah: they're OK

Daisy: Are you gonna pass down your Pandora ring?

[One of the other girls]: Nope

Norah: No!

Daisy: Oh! OK

Norah: I'll keep this. No.

Norah took comfort from the symbolism of family history and the "passing down" of the china dolls, which she now owned. This was contrasted with her "Pandora ring" (Pandora is a

fashionable jewellers who specialise in customised jewellery), something that the other girls were aware of, recognising the status and value of the ring. Norah's attachment to the ring is different from her attachment to the china dolls; it is for herself alone, and at present this distinguishes it from having family heirloom status.

Family attachments were also described in terms of similarities with family members.

Sometimes these were shared interests, as voiced by Jordan:

Like I've always either supported football, or- watched football, played football, been a part of football- I used to love going to the park and playing football with my older brother, even though he wasn't very good – um, and my step-dad as well at the time, which was, was fantastic, like one of my favourite things to do. My dad was never big into football, so it kind of *worked* that I lived with my mum, who *was* a big football fan, who I could talk football with...

Jordan constructed his love and passion for football as something that had facilitated family relationships working out well and to his advantage. The shared family interest in football had supported the relationship that he built with his step-dad and his mother and Jordan used this to contrast with living apart from his father who did not share his interest in football.

Sometimes sharing everyday activities with a family member was important, as described by

Sharina, aged 15, writing on her happiness map:

I like grocery shopping because it's easy and simple. I like grocery shopping with my mum because I feel like we're bonding.

Lori, aged 15, considered how renewing family attachments in the future would be important to her happiness as she discussed how happiness may change in the Year 11 discussion group:

I think as you get older it changes, cos when you're younger, it could just be like drawing, or colouring something...as you get older it could be like going home for the holidays to see your like family if you haven't seen [them] for a while. I think as you

get older, it goes from being, like, superficial things and as you get older it goes to being...more...like...dunno.

The importance of close attachments with family members was illustrated across the happiness data from young people. Bowlby (1979, pgs. 129-131) argues that the essence of attachment behaviour is such that humans seek to build and maintain proximity to [a] specific person/s that they prefer, whom the individual considers “stronger and/or wiser” than themselves. The first attachment figure is usually the child’s mother, or other close caregiver. Wolkind and Rutter (1985) agree that young children develop strong selective attachments, but actually have several strong attachments including with the father, other family members and friends, with all attachments providing safety and security. They agree that the child has a hierarchy of selection “with the mother generally being the most powerful in serving an anxiety- reducing function. This does not necessarily mean that fathers are any less important; not only do most children show attachments with their fathers but often fathers are preferred over mothers for playful interactions” (Wolkind & Rutter, 1985, p. 35). The importance of attachment bonds in people’s happiness is firstly one of providing initial safety and security. It is subsequently important because this attachment relationship provides a blueprint of future close relationships, through repeated positive interactions with the attachment figure, that are associated with feeling happy and loved (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013).

5.3.1.2 Memories and experiences of young people’s happiness in the past are closely allied to family

Family holidays featured on twelve of the happiness questionnaires as something that young people associated with happiness. In the individual interviews, when asked about experiences of happiness that they had had as a child, family holidays were talked about by Norah, Daniel and Rachel. Here, Norah and Daniel recounted those happy memories:

Norah: Erm...I have a memory of when all of us went on holiday. We went to America- that was our last holiday *together*...And...I don't have any other memories really...of anyone else...but...

Cordelia: Mmm

Norah: It was a good memory...

Cordelia: Yeah

Norah: ...To keep with all my brothers and sisters.

Daniel: Yeah- going on holidays. Erm, I remember once, er (laughs) my parents told us that we were going to go to a shop and so we all got in the car, and then we were driving along for like three hours or something. I don't know how we didn't catch on that we weren't going to the shop- like "Oh my God, are we nearly there yet?" And then we saw Butlins round the corner and we all just sort of freaked out. And that was- I had a really good time. I've been to Butlins twice and then we've also been to Florida...twice...though me being young, I don't really have any memory of those- don't tell my parents! [Laughs] And, um- yeah...they were...good experiences.

5.3.1.3 The importance of family support and understanding to young people's happiness

Feeling supported by family, having someone to talk to, being understood and having an ally in family emerged as features of family that were important to young people. For some of the older children in the Year 11 discussion group, the role of an ally was moving away from family towards friends (see Section 5.4 below). Jordan, however, discussed how family support was still essential to his happiness in the discussion group:

Jordan: It's important having family *behind* you as well I notice...there's many cases where, you know...especially when I...t...tell them everything, cos I tell my family everything- my *mum* everything- my dad knows next to nothing, but [indecipherable]...but there's few things my mum doesn't know...about me...except for...you know, um, and er, [others laugh], and but erm, so yeah, I tell my mum everything, and she's...she still...needs to...think that I can do better than I can, but she knows that I come as well as I do [laughs], so its changes.

In her individual interview, Norah disclosed the effect that her dyslexia had on her happiness, and how her parents tried to understand and support her:

Norah: ...Like stuff. I panic a lot...with like my work. And thinking that I'm not gonna get...my grades that I need, and then I stress, and then I take it out on people, but...Like I take it out on my mum, and my dad, but I don't *mean* to take it out on them. They, they know what- like how I feel and that...and they understand. But, it's just...I know how to control myself...but I find it really hard like not...able to do the stuff in class that other people can do.

Norah talked about how she was borderline dyslexic (in terms of dyslexia diagnosis tests; she was not quite dyslexic enough to be diagnosed), which would have enabled her to get support at school. Her mother was an important ally in communicating with the school trying to get dyslexia support for Norah:

Norah: My mum's doing like everything she can though

Cordelia: Yeah

Norah: She's like saying...she needs this help. They're doing- they're doing their *best* to get it but it's hard, cause they've got to think of *other* children as well, not...just me.

Bowlby (1979, p. 103) argued that the importance of an attachment figure was not restricted to young children. Having the confidence that one or two trusted individuals are behind you ready to help if needed is the basis of being happiest, maintained Bowlby. Knowing that you have a secure base means that you are able to do your best in life. This applies to children,

adolescents and adults. Recent research on adolescent relationships endorses the importance of perceptions of mothers' and fathers' support and parents' enacted support (supportive behaviours) on young people's quality of relationships with others (Flynn, Felmlee, & Conger, 2014). For Jordan and Norah, the security and support provided by their mothers are clearly expressed in how these relationships were important to them.

5.3.1.4 Considerations of gender in understanding family and happiness

In the happiness questionnaires, girls were predominantly those who engaged in reflection on their happiness maps. Tatlow-Golden and Guerin (2017) found that when considering their active and social selves (aspects of their self-concept), relationships and talking were more salient for girls than for boys. Both boys and girls valued relationships, with parents being the most important, followed by siblings, friends, wider family and peers. In my study, there were more girls than boys who completed the happiness questionnaires (24 girls, 15 boys, one self-identified as "male/female") and of the seven who chose *not* to reflect on their happiness maps, five of these were boys aged 15. Two more 15 year old boys included very brief reflections or descriptions of their happiness maps, including Brandon, who wrote the reflection on his happiness map as a list of what he loved and what he hated:

What I hate: Mondays Dishwasher Housework Rubbish Food School

What I love: Parties Music Family Friends Money \$ Clothes Christmas

Understanding how or why certain things made boys aged 15 happy from the questionnaires was more difficult, as they did not tend to expand, elaborate or reflect on them to the same degree that girls did. Perhaps the boys' tendency not to engage in reflection mirrors Tatlow-Golden and Guerin's findings that talking was more important to girls than to boys. However,

for all of the boys in my study, either “family” or a named family member featured in their happiness maps; for 12 of the boys, family/family members were in the circle closest to the centre, indicating their great importance to their happiness, for two boys family/family members was in the second circle and one boy placed family in the third circle. O’Higgins, Sixsmith and Nic Gabhainn (2010) also noticed gender differences in their study of 13 year olds’ perceptions of the concepts of “healthy” and “happy”: although belonging to social networks (family and friends) was important to both boys and girls, the girls in their study were more likely than boys to talk about conflicts with their parents. Although the boys in my study did not always want to discuss their happiness in any detail, family still featured very strongly in their happiness. These nuanced gender differences in how boys and girls include and discuss the importance of significant relationships to their happiness would benefit from further research.

5.3.2 Complex aspects of family and young people’s happiness.

5.3.2.1 Feelings towards family

Young people often talked about the love they felt for their family, and family members. Sometimes this love was described as unconditional, and at other times, feelings of love for family were also tempered with more difficult feelings. These are intertwined and reflect the complex nature of relationships with loved ones. The open ended format of the different sections of the questionnaires enabled young people to articulate that these important relationships were not straightforward. This illustrates that research into happiness is not just a quantifiable list of things that make people happy, but relationships like those with family and friends are qualified, and contingent. It is also interesting to note that individual representations of “family” are different. It was evident in the happiness questionnaires that young people spoke about both “family” and also individual family members. The happiness

map and the subsequent open ended section allowing for reflection on the maps allowed young people to depict relationships with different people who all constitute “family”, something which is absent from self-report measures on happiness with family. This was illustrated by Becky’s (aged 15) reflection on things and people she included on her happiness map:

Family – I love them unconditionally

Brother from another mother – love them to pieces but sometimes I really wanna push them in a ditch

Soapbox derby – I have a really good time spending time with my dad

Three different aspects of Becky’s feelings towards her family and individual family members were revealed here. On the one hand, she talked of unconditional love for her family, and on the other of great love for her half-brother, but also of extreme irritation. Lastly, she enjoyed what is implicitly a special time with her father doing a joint activity together.

Love for family and friends were often related to both feelings of happiness and unhappiness. Paige, aged 15, revealed that although she loved her family and friends, they also were responsible for her sometimes feeling sad:

Family and friends- I love my friends and family but sometimes they cause me sadness.

Georgia (aged 15) enjoyed being with her family, but also needed time to herself away from them:

Family: They’re important in my life and I love seeing them other times I’d rather be alone.

Grace (aged 15) had placed family in the circle closest to the centre of her happiness map, indicating their high relative importance to her happiness. Nonetheless, in her reflection, Grace described the contingent nature of how her family contributed to her happiness:

My happiness map is a mixture of both things and people that make me happy. Things like my family will make me happy under certain conditions (them not being annoying) nevertheless, I will still need and love them and so they would probably come quite close to me on the happiness map no matter how annoying they are.

5.3.2.2. Normative aspects of relationships with family

The Year 11 discussion questioned cultural norms of family relationships to some extent.

Isabelle argued that it is normative to get along with your family, and that family have normative roles – “they say”- which are to “be good” for their children. She suggested that young people can be forced to think a certain way about their family because of these norms.

Daniel outlined what some of the norms are: gratitude to family because they are responsible for our existence, and that children should be ‘guaranteed’ to get along with their family simply because that is who they are. For Jordan, this offered a rationale for why he should not have to get along with his siblings. Daniel acknowledged, in a whisper, that families can also have a “dark side”, implying that families can also be bad for people. O’Dell, Crafter, Abreu and Cline (2014, p. 4) maintain that “constructions of childhood are bound up with conceptions of what constitutes a “normative” family, what can be expected of ‘normal’ parenting and how children are supported to become adult citizens.” The young people in the Year 11 discussion group were aware of these conceptions of normative family roles and relationships, and also how these do not represent all families, but deviating from normative expectations can leave them feeling ‘abnormal’. Diener (1984), as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3) raised the point that people may be unhappy but label themselves as happy. Diener argues that cultural norms for people to be happy may influence people to say that

they are, even to the extent of disregarding their own experiences that suggest otherwise. It is noteworthy that the awareness of family norms and how they reflect or are different from their own experiences was only raised and discussed by the Year 11 group. In the younger Year 10 group, family arguments and getting along together were discussed in relation to their happiness, but these were not analysed in the same way as the older group.

Cordelia: so what about family members? And family...

Daniel: Well without them we wouldn't be alive, so kind of owe our...

[Jordan tries to speak over him]

Daniel: ... We owe our entirety to them...Without your grandfather you wouldn't be alive, without you father you wouldn't be alive, and without your brothers and sisters

Jordan: That's why I, I don't have, have to like my siblings

Isabelle: I feel like it shouldn't be abnormal like *not* to get on with your family...

Unknown: [agreeing] Yeah

Isabelle: ... (Continues) Cos some of 'em are not

Daniel: They should be the one people who you are guaranteed to...

Isabelle: They say family should be good for you, but some of 'em aren't. So...you shouldn't be forced to think you have to...get on with your family

Daniel: (In a whisper) the *dark* side

The normative expectation that you "should" get along with your family was also redefined with regard to what counted as family by the young people in Year 11:

Jordan: ...The blood related side. I don't really class that as family. I wouldn't class that as my family. Cos I have, like, you know...

Lori: Family are people you choose

Jordan: ...I...I...it's like who I *choose* to be my family...It's like my cousin over here...I...I...can choose who my family is, but I can't choose who my family members are...If that makes sense

Mason and Tipper argue that children often think beyond conventional or cultural notions of kinship and instead that unconventional models of kinship represent an “ordinary complexity of kinship” (Mason & Tipper, 2008, p. 443). In their study of children's conceptualisations of kinship, it was the quality of the relationships that often underpinned those relationships defined by children as being ones that seemed like-family. Children engaged in the “conscious practice of drawing specific people close by claiming them to be like family and this practice was always used by children to signify good or close relationships”. As well as non-related adults, Mason and Tipper found that children also claimed “like-family kinship” with friends. The children in Mason and Tipper's study described the emotional connections and significant time (of friendship) in these relationships, often stretching back to very early childhood. In my study however, Jordan had only known these friends whom he felt were more like family to him for two-and-a half years. These new bonds he had formed were for the first time in his life relationships outside of his “blood relations” that were close and reliable. Mason and Tipper (2008, p 452) argue that “like kin” relationships need to be relationships that contain “interpersonal and interactive elements” as well as those that are close and caring.

5.3.2.3 The changing nature of relationships with family

Erikson (1963) proposed that humans have “eight ages”: distinct periods of life development, each containing an ‘ego crisis’ that needs to be resolved before one can successfully move onto the next stage of life. Erikson describes an ego crisis as a crisis of alternative attitudes: conceived of as a sensing something that is experienced both consciously and subconsciously, that influences both our observable behaviour and our inner states.

Adolescence, according to Erikson, is a period in which young people are attempting to resolve the crises of *identity vs. role confusion*: in other words, the adolescent is concerned with who they are and what role they take within society.

Erikson writes that adolescents are conflicted as to who they are in the eyes of others, compared with who they feel that they are, as well as attempting to reconcile how their own skills and abilities will equip them in future employment. Whilst pitching whom Erikson terms as “well-meaning people” as their adversaries (we can read parents and other older, wiser adults here), Erikson suggests that young people seek to identify more with their idols in considering who they would like to be. Erikson accuses adolescents of over-identification with contemporary heroes and idols during this period. Within their own cohort, he depicts a tendency of cruel and ostracizing behaviour towards those who are different in how they look, dress or behave, engaged with as a defence mechanism against one’s own identity confusion. Erikson argues that the adolescent mind is particularly vulnerable to strong ideologies of society, and young people are at risk of adopting ideologies whilst they are between childhood and adulthood. When considering how the young people in my study talked about their relationships with their family and their friends (see also Section 5.4 below), we can recognise elements of what Erikson suggests, but Erikson appears too blunt and unforgiving in his portraiture of young people, when we consider what young people

themselves are saying and thinking. It is apparent from the data here that the quality of relationships with both family and friends are important to their happiness.

In some of the questionnaires and in the Year 11 discussion group, changing relationships with family were discussed. Although “family” was still important to Sophie’s (aged 14) happiness, it was not as important as it was previously as she reflected on her happiness map:

The reason I’ve put family in the second circle is because I don’t interact with them like I used to but the reason I put movies/food in the first circle is because I love to eat and watch things.

In the Year 11 discussion groups, young people discussed the changing nature of their relationships with their family as they were growing up, including the reasons the young people attributed to this change.

Holly: I think as you grow up your family just become less and less important to you. Like I remember when I was a young child, like family was everything, and now I just don’t really focus on them

Emily: Its cos they don’t really care...well they do care about you (others laughing) but they don’t care *for* you

[Others laughing]

Daniel: You’re less *dependent* on them

Emily: Yeah

Daniel: So you become less attached to them

Bowlby (1979, pgs. 132-133) maintains that the concepts of dependence and attachment are distinct from each other, and not related. According to Bowlby, dependence does not imply any strong feelings towards an individual, or suggest that there is a lasting bond, unlike

attachment. Bowlby further purports that there are negative associations with being dependent on someone, compared with positive attributions of being attached to someone. Bowlby's thesis is that attachment is necessary for human survival, and enables the securely attached person to have the confidence to explore ever further from their home environment. The attachment figure is there to be available for the child, and to support and help the child in a sensitive manner if difficulties arise.

The line of reasoning being explored by the young people in this discussion group seems to contradict that of Bowlby. Whereas Bowlby maintains that dependence is not focussed on a specific individual, and is not dependent on proximity and has no biological function, for the young people considering how their relationships with their parents are changing, dependence, attachment and biological survival are inexorably intertwined. The debate about whether attachment and dependency are the same or different is discussed by Wolkind & Rutter (1985, pgs. 35-36). Wolkind & Rutter argue that attachment concerns dyadic relationships, and not behavioural traits or individual characteristics. This is firstly because the attachment quality between a child and one of its parents does not predict the quality of attachment with the other parents, reflecting rather that relationship, rather than a specific trait of the child. Secondly, Wolkind & Rutter argue that (in very young children) those demonstrating secure attachments are less likely to show high dependency and are rather more autonomous. Evidence for this concerns children's dependency and autonomy at 4-5 years old, however, and not at adolescence. Psychological understanding that relationships within families are not just one way processes prescribed by parental influences on their children began to change in the 1960s (Rutter & Cox, 1985, p. 61). Studies revealing individual differences in child characteristics, and a two way relationship of parent-child effects were followed by conceptualising relationships as circular processes: familial relationships are a product of what has gone before and what resulted from those actions.

Dyadic relationships also need to be considered within a system of relationships that exist within families, influenced by other relationships in the family environment (Rutter & Cox, 1985, p. 61).

In his individual interview, Jordan frequently expressed his love and feelings of attachment for his mother. As he spoke about the history of this relationship, he revealed that his position in the family had been altered when his younger half-brother had been born. Previously, he had enjoyed being the youngest child in the family, and he was now an older brother. Jordan began his interview with his life history: he moved around a lot when he was younger in various towns across the United Kingdom as a consequence of his father's military postings and that his parents had separated and got back together again and then separated again in the early years of his life. In describing one of the places he lived in his early years, he said:

And that was where I had my...primary socialisation that I did...at the beginning...like school stuff.

As the interview progressed, Jordan's disclosure about his life and his relationship with his mother and how much she meant to him were intertwined with disclosures about how he felt about his changing position in the family, after his brother had been born, and how this affected his relationship with his mother. Towards the end of his interview, he talked about adopting "a second socialisation style", and how he had begun to look outward from his family and make other relationships when his younger brother was born:

Um, but...yeah, so obviously I just l-love her being there, which is great. She's never been- she's never like...I think...having younger siblings is always hard cause...especially when they're like between the ages of one and five, because that's where all mum's focus went on for like one to five years (half laugh). And um... (Pause) yeah. So that was like...I was sort of an *outcast* then...but that was when I got a lot of...that was when I did, um, I was really developing like a second socialisation style of...going out...and meeting people...making new friends....got my first *phone* when I was like 13 or something like that. I got like a little Samsung phone, which is like the best thing in the world...I could (indecipherable) phone, and the time was on

it...I remember being very happy with it. And it was fantastic....But...in the same way, obviously my mum's always been very um...dis-ci-plin-ar-ianism- that, that word! Um, there's always been very, um...you know...obviously I was like the *middle* child for, for a long time- it was eleven years before my younger brother was born...um from when I was born to my younger brother. I'm eleven years older than my brother. ...And (pause)...yeah...that was always quite difficult.

It is interesting that Jordan framed much of his life history within his conceptualisation of “socialisation”. As a GCSE student of psychology/sociology, he would be aware of the term socialisation, but in reflecting on his relationships with others, he chose to understand his subjective experiences and development in these terms. James (2013, p. 4) comments that “children are social actors with agency”; suggesting that the ways that children become social, their social needs in the present and of their future should be understood as a concern of children. James argues that previously socialisation has been defined as a one way process, and that this view of children and socialisation needs to change: “I want to move away from seeing socialisation as something done to children; more insightfully, I want to ask how this process is experienced and made sense of by them” (James, 2013, pgs. 4-5). Jordan used his understanding of what socialisation means in order to make sense of his relationship with his mother, his position in the family, and his relationship with friends. James (2013, p. 10-15) emphasises the importance of understanding socialisation from the child's own perspective: children are able to critically reflect and evaluate on their lives, and their social and cultural roles and relations with others, and within the social, cultural and moral institutions in which they live.

Bowlby writes about the conflict experienced by the developing child to regulate feelings of love and anger, sometimes even hatred towards “the very person we most care for” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 3). Integral to the child's developing maturity, argues Bowlby, is the developing capability to regulate these conflicting feelings in order to “experience in a healthy way his anxiety and guilt” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 3). Although Bowlby predominantly writes about

children in their formative years, and the importance of their relationship with primarily their main caregiver, he describes the phenomenon of anger towards and a wish to hurt the one we love the most as a simple conflict of humanity that endures throughout one's life. Bowlby couches this conflict in terms of regulating ambivalence: an awareness that one has contradictory feelings. Young people in my study spoke of their complex feelings towards those that they loved and cared for, and also of differing feelings aroused in themselves by those they loved.

5.3.2.4 Family can adversely affect young people's happiness

In both of the discussion groups, young people also spoke about how their family negatively affected their happiness at times. In the Year 11 discussion groups, the young people directly compared actions of family with those of their friends. Often these related to parents' attitudes towards them that had been held since childhood, and a lack of positivity towards their children, as illustrated by the following excerpt from the Year 11 discussion on family:

Lori: Sometimes as well though they have like...like an expectation of you that you...probably that they've been holding of you since you were a young child...

Daniel: ...That you can't fulfil

Lori: Yeah...And it always feels like you're trying to fulfil something that you can't. Like with your friends...and things like that... or like with your family you're *close* with sort of know how you actually *are*...

...Lori: (indecipherable) that *aren't* family that they understand more, cos they don't expect it from you

Holly: It's like you get a negative aura around your family sometimes. It's like I talk to my dad about sixth form and college, I just get like *negative* feelings because I feel like something bad'll be brung up, but if I talk about it with friends, it'll be *positive* because they all believe in me

Jordan: Yeah, I notice that as well cos mm...mm...so, my mum and dad are divorced and when I go to my dad's it's...like my dad is always like "Yeah, yeah, it's a genius idea, you can do all this, you can get an A star in maths, don't worry about it, it's fine" and then I speak to my mum and she's like "No...that's not gonna happen"

In the Year 10 discussion group, Daisy described how family could sometimes ruin a moment that should be a good time:

Daisy: Say you like had to go to your friend's house and then like your mum says 'Oh take your homework with you'; all of a sudden it seems like a chore to go over

Both discussion groups discussed how family expected them to be happy and to cheer others up. Family worries and panicked if they thought their children were not happy. This point is discussed further in Chapter 8.

The importance of choice in relationships was particularly evident in the Year 11 discussion group discussion. For these young people aged 15-16, they were exploring out from family and forging close relationships of their own:

Emily: They're [family] just there, like they're *always* there...if that makes sense...like you're not *forced* to socialise with...but you're forced to have a relation with them...whereas friends, you choose to

Cordelia: Yeah...yeah. You feel like...You're pretty much in agreement with that [to the rest of the group]...with friends...about how they're part of you know what makes you happy?

Jordan: Yes

[Lots of other yeahs, yesses from the rest of the group]

Daniel: Definitely

One of the girls, [quietly]: Because you can choose them

Cordelia [confirming]: Because you choose them.

Bowlby (1979, p. 136) maintains that parents' sensitivity towards their child's desire and need for a secure base, and then encouragement to explore out from it affect their child's ability to form other attachment bonds. Children need to know that their parents will always be available for them and parents need to respect the child's wishes to explore and form new relationships with peers and other adults. We can see the "always...availability" of parents in how Emily talked about them. Flynn et al., (2014) agree that supportive relationships with parents are important for children and adolescents, but these need to be understood within a wider social context of relationships. Adolescents are embedded within complex social networks of family, friends, romantic relationships (amongst others) and all of these relationships influence each other.

In a recent study on Spanish children's and adolescent's conceptualisations of happiness, there was no difference in the age groups between the importance given to "family" and "friends", contrary to the expectations of the authors (Lopez-Perez et al., 2016). Drawing on

research that has found differences between children and adolescents in which are their most important close relationships, they had expected younger children to prioritise relationships with family, and adolescents to privilege relationships with peers and romantic relationships in how they defined and conceptualised happiness. However, as in my study, both family and friends are integral to happiness, although these relationships are nuanced and complex. In my study, young people spoke of wanting to avoid conflict, not of a desire to set it up in order to win battles with well-meaning adversaries. For the older children particularly, happiness gained from their close friendships is distinguished by a reciprocated knowledge, tolerance and encouragement to be their real selves as they are now. This is contrasted with the well-meaning attempts of their family who are holding on to ideals and expectations of their child from the past, as well feelings that their families have a tendency to lack belief, or to undermine in some way how their child considers their future. Happiness from these relationships is, then, recognisable in the ego conflict that Erikson identifies, being their “real selves”; but the struggles to achieve this are different and more subtle that Erikson suggests.

5.4 FRIENDSHIPS AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS

5.4.1 Positive aspects of friends and young people’s happiness.

Having a good time with friends, whether through “hanging out” or talking, spending time together with people that they liked was evident as important to young people’s happiness across the data. In the Year 11 Discussion group, they discussed bonding with friends through sharing music as being important to their happiness. The willingness to share music was part of the act of strengthening this bond:

Jordan: I think as well, I love, um, when my friends are willing to share music with me, and I really like, like the music that they share with me... And I think as well, music links in so...like music’s got this, quite personal private type of thing, the kind of music

you listen to...you, you'd share it with people you're close to, like people your family members, your friends, and I think... The reason that at the ultimate level of bonding, you share music with each other that you know, mean...No, no-one knows I have the, the Taylor Swift album on my phone; no-one knows that!

In their individual interviews, Daniel and Jordan discussed how they maintained their offline friendships online as part of their present experiences of happiness:

Daniel (Year 11): But I usually like Skype my best friend throughout the week, sometimes on weekends- Sundays and stuff.

Jordan (Year 11): Like, I, I still *communicate* with people I used to live with. I play computer games with them a lot, over, on, on my PC, which is awesome, I love that. I get to stay in contact with some of them

One of the features of Bowlby's attachment theory is the maintenance of closeness with the preferred person or few people throughout one's life. Rutter and Rutter (1992, p.110) extend this to the natural socialisation of human beings, which they argue, is a primary facet of being human, not a secondary one. Bowlby acknowledges that during adolescence, the strengths of early childhood attachments may reduce for a while, and new attachment bonds may form, and in some cases these new bonds may replace the early ones. Nonetheless, the early attachments endure for the most part. The strength of close attachment bonds with friends as disclosed by the young people in my study can be seen as examples of Bowlby's "new" adolescent attachments. Whilst Rutter and Rutter (1992, p. 11) agree with Bowlby that attachments are important in children's relationships, they argue that it does not constitute the entirety of their relationships and the quality of one particular dyadic relationship does not mean that attachments will all have the same quality. Rutter and Rutter (1992, p. 118) maintain that each subsequent relationship and expectation of future relationships alters both the self-concept of the individual, and also their concept of what relationships are, and this in turn, shapes our social behaviour, but in a very general way. Social connections were found

to be the most frequently cited meaning of valued activities amongst young adolescents (Tatlow-Golden & Guerin, 2017), that related to one of the major domains of adolescent self-concept, the active self. Another important adolescent self-concept domain is the social self: young adolescents most frequently mentioned parents as the most important relationship for them, followed by siblings, friends, then their wider family and pets (Tatlow-Golden & Guerin, 2017).

Bowlby wrote about the nature of emotion in attachments, “many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption, and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone, and losing a partner as grieving over someone” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 130). Throughout the data in this study gathered on happiness, the love expressed for people that young people are close to is evident. Bowlby argued that attachment behaviour is not childish in any shape or form, and is just as important to humans as to feeding and sexual behaviour. Such intensity of emotion for his friends is articulated by Daniel:

Daniel: You have the friend that you love...but you hate at the same time. You, you like being around them yet they infuriate you but you couldn't live without them. You have the friends who can make you laugh, even when you're incredibly upset...and you have the friends who are just...there because they're friends with/of your friends

Young people spoke of the different ways that their friends made them happy. Sometimes these positive attributes of friends were contrasted with how family did not provide them with the same thing. Although family and friends were both people who knew the young people well, in the Year 11 Discussion group, it was *how* family or friends used the knowledge about them that affected their happiness. Friends were described as being on their level, knowing them, knowing what they were like most days. Implicit in the impact of friends on their

happiness is the comfort of similarity of outlook, an easy familiarity, and of wanting to make each other happy, as illustrated in this excerpt:

Emily: Friends know how to *make* you happy

Isabelle: Yeah. Whereas family sometimes don't understand where you're coming from...someone the same age as you, like going through the same stuff.

Lori: Yeah

Emily: Yeah, family like can be like *too* caring and too protective whereas friends are like...sort of on your level, they know how to make you happy...they know *you*

Lori: Yeah, what you're like most days. Like. When you're not seeing your family, like you're normally with your friends

The group of girls then discussed the differences between how their friends and family approached tackling any difficult situation, demonstrating the empathy they felt they had from friends compared to their family:

Isabelle: Yeah sometimes family want you to kind of *deal* with it whereas your friends know that it's not that easy sometimes...I think

Emily: And family you don't always talk to because they're...

Lori: They're [friends] going through it as well

Emily: ...They're [family] just there, like they're *always* there...if that makes sense.

Confiding in and being able to trust friends is integral to the strength and quality of close friendships. Spencer's (2013) study of young people's understandings of health also noted how young people spoke about the importance of friends being there for them in times of difficulty. Sometimes these friendships were those that existed outside of school, such as the friendships that Norah her individual interviews described:

Norah: It's good cause...like I have a best friend that's a girl, and a best friend that's a boy, so I always *have* someone that...if I don't wanna tell my *other* best friend, I can always tell one of them, so I'm not just keeping something from one of them and then not telling the other.

The ability to trust some friends more than family was mentioned by Lori, aged 15:

Going back to friends...sometimes you trust them *more* than, you know, like family

The older children in Year 11 appeared more confident in their knowledge of how friendships operated. They spoke about friends in a way that revealed how different friends have different functions, and individual relations with each friend that aroused particular and sometimes conflicting emotions, as shown in the quote about friends from Daniel above. Some were friends they felt comfortable talking to (disclosing intimate information); some friends they knew weren't there to talk to:

Isabelle: You have a friend that you know you can talk to and friends....you know that you sh- you won't bother [indecipherable as others talking]

The older children were also able to recognise that some friends were only their friends because they were friends of their friends, with the clear implication that these were not close friends. Similarly, the friends that they had on social media they tried to keep the same as the friends that they had in real life, valuing fewer numbers, but closer relationships over quantity of friends.

For one young person, the friends that she had prevented her from being lonely, as Bethany, aged 14 wrote in her questionnaire:

My friends are also important because I would get lonely.

Friends did things for the young people they know the person liked. These included buying their friends favourite food: Norah (Year 10) talked of how her friends would go to the shop and buy her sweetcorn, and Jordan (Year 11) spoke of his friends buying him chicken, which he loved. Being aware of their friend's emotional states, and making the effort to support their friend when they were feeling sad was an aspect of strong friendship that was disclosed by Daniel:

Because if you're unhappy- it's to do with friends- if you're unhappy and your friends notice you're unhappy, they *will* try and make you happy.

For the young people in Year 11, facing higher education choices after their forthcoming GCSEs that year was bound up with the close friendships that they had made. There was a sense of looking back at shared experiences of happiness with friends, and wanting those experiences and those close friendships to continue, which partly influenced their future choices, as explained by Holly:

Yeah. I feel like, expanding on what he said, like why people choose to come here instead of other places, say like, we're trying to cling onto the happiness that we had here, like it may not *seem* like everyone's happy in here, but I think we're staying because we want the same friend group, the same people we're around, the same environment...that, that makes us happy. So we think...the happiness will continue.

For the Year 11 young people, friends were felt to be a big part of their lives, contributing towards making them who they were, and that they would not be the same person without their friends. Daniel spoke for several members of this discussion group in describing these feelings:

Daniel: I think we all have that one person in here who...if they were gone...it would affect our happiness...

[Girl laughs in acknowledgement]- Yeah...

Daniel: So...personally I have like, three or four in here, who if they were to suddenly *move*, it would make me *very* upset, because then I'd know that they'd no longer be as much of an influence and a part of my life as they are now.

Chow, Ruhl and Buhrmester's (2016) longitudinal study of friendship attachments during adolescence emphasises that relational experiences of friendships in adolescence have a bi-directional influence on the attachment security of those relationships. In other words, what happens in the friendships affects how young people perceive whether their friendships are supportive or anxiety provoking, and vice-versa. For the young people in my study, positive experiences of friendships and enjoyment of time spent together was integral to their happiness. Nonetheless, as illustrated in Section 5.4.2 below, negative experiences with friends were both explicitly and implicitly revealed as causes of distress.

5.4.2 Negative aspects of friends and young people's happiness.

As outlined in Section 5.3, the relationship between family and young people's happiness was complex. Similarly, relationships with friends could also be problematic and engender conflicting feelings and unhappiness. In her reflection on her happiness map, Georgia, aged 15, indicated that although friends had knowledge of how to make her happier when she was sad, there was also a downside to this relationship:

Friends: They know how to cheer me up and are always there for me but sometimes they annoy me.

In many ways happiness from friendships was contingent on getting on well together. This was apparent from several of the questionnaires, and also from the Year 10 discussion group.

Marie, aged 14: Things such as my family, friends and dog only make me happy when we are getting on well and they are happy.

Daisy: If it's all good, then they can make you really happy. But if there's like trouble, or like arguments, then they're just like...Ohhh [in exasperated voice]...Nooo

Cordelia: And is that for both of them? Is it for both family and friends?

Daisy: Cause if you're arguing with your family or friends it's just...just like *that* makes you down. Just...If it's negative, it's really negative. If it's positive it's really positive.

The Year 10 Discussion group had some difficult dynamics. Although all of the girls participating in the discussion had volunteered to take part, there was an uncomfortable atmosphere between some of them. When the discussion moved on to friendships, an imbalance in power dynamics was particularly apparent. Olivia had not wanted to talk much to this point, and when Norah began to talk about more difficult feelings she experienced in her friendships, Olivia crossed her arms and stared hard at Norah. Norah clearly wanted to talk more, but eventually she faltered and gave in to the silent pressure exerted from Olivia:

Norah: Friends make me happy, but sometimes they make me feel depressed

Daisy: Yeahhh

Norah: Like...just thinking that I come to school and I have friends but...

Daisy: Arguments

Norah: ...Yeah- they make me depressed. Like, sometimes I wish like I didn't have any, but sometimes I do (embarrassed; half smiling tone of voice) if you know what I mean but...

[Someone else laughing]

Norah: [continues]...some are alright um, I just, just don't like...

Daisy: Oh, God that look- [whispered, meaning Olivia looking at Norah]

Norah: ...No

Cordelia: Yeah?

Norah: [to Olivia] don't look at me like that

There were some other indications of problems with friends throughout the data, including this thought on one of the things that made Sharina (aged 15) happy from her questionnaire:

The people I'm with- good friends- actual friends that I like.

Sometimes falling out with friends made young people feel that they did not want to come to school. In their individual interviews, Norah and Rachel had more freedom away from the restrictions of the discussion group, and both talked about difficulties with friends at school, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

Norah: Seeing friends.

Cordelia: Yeah

Norah: That can affect my happiness sometimes.

Cordelia: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Norah: Well...if we get into an argument, then...it affects like *loads* of people, and loads of things like...I don't want to come into school...I don't want to see that person and...stuff like that.

Rachel: I think...that *not* being at school makes me happy. Like, I'm like with more people...that I get on with. There's always people that you don't get on with when you're in a class, but there's always people that I *do* get on with...

Cordelia: Mmm

Rachel: ...And I *know* that I get on with everyone

Cordelia: So it's more to do with people...at school...and that has an impact on your happiness?

Rachel nods.

Both Norah and Rachel talked warmly about the friends that they had outside of school.

Norah had family friends, and friends from her dance school; Rachel enjoyed her time at Cadets because of the people there that she got on with. However, for both of them, friendships at school were difficult.

For the most part, the Year 11 discussion group appeared close-knit and respectful of one another, even when differences of opinion were being aired. However, there were still indications that there were unspoken rules and allegiances of friendships which were tightly bounded. These surfaced as a progression of Daniel's pronouncement about friends being an influence on his life, in response to my question about how dependent was their happiness on someone else:

Daniel: To be fair, it's like not even...people you're closest with, it's just things that you get used to. If it's gone it will...deteriorate your mood, like, if someone...like, if for example you're in a class with 30 people and you know 29 of them, and then *no-one* else in that class is friends with that 30th person, if that 30th person were to *go*, people would notice, people would ...miss

One of the girls: Still feel weird

Daniel: ...Because it's a change, and not everybody likes change...

[Whispering from someone]

Daniel: ...It's difficult

Jordan: The thing as well like...I, I've recently moved to []. I didn't live here. I used to live in, in a place up North. Not-not with my dad, I just used to live in a place up North, with my Mum. And...I wasn't very popular there either, I didn't have any friends...um, I didn't have any friends until...Like I literally had one or two friends until I was about Year 7 or Year 8. Um...and, I, I had one friend from Year 7 and Year 8 which I was very happy with, and I'm still friends with him now. I play games with him, even, even some of my current friends have met him over...social media, and things like that, which, I like that I've kept that up with him [to Daniel: Bradley]

Daniel: Bradley

Jordan: And I like that...

[Daniel is whispering "Unfortunately a twat"- meaning Bradley; someone else is half laughing at what Daniel is saying],

Jordan: ...you know, obviously I don't depend on him to be happy, but I like...he used to and he still *does*, and I, I can't see me ever *not* being friends with him. Obviously I will- I won't be friends with him and one point in my life, you know, as opposed to most people that I know *now*, in like, 10 or so years from now. But, for now, I'm glad that I have...a certain group of friends I can rely on to...make me happy, which is...yeah

In his individual interview, Jordan talked about frequently moving towns and schools throughout his life. His friendships that he had at the present time (with Daniel and others) were very important to him, and to his happiness. He described his previous lack of popularity and friends publicly in the discussion group. During the excerpt above, he mentioned a friend from his previous school whose friendship he still valued and he made efforts to maintain. As Daniel dismissed this previous friend "unfortunately a twat" to laughter from others, Jordan shifted his position on the importance of his friendship with

Bradley. Jordan refined his position in terms of present and future relationships that make him happy. He stopped short of abandoning Bradley altogether, but it is his current friendships that he chose to emphasise in this forum- those are the ones that he had to *rely on now*- and this is carefully worded to show his current allegiance and awareness that being friends with Bradley and also being able to rely on his current friends is not publicly compatible.

When considering dimensions of friendship, Demir and Urberg (2004) note that it is important to remember that they may not be independent from each other. Demir and Urberg found that happiness and depression were negatively correlated, and in their study, subsequently combined measures of happiness and depression produce a latent measure termed emotional adjustment. This provides an indication that there are overlapping elements of happiness and unhappiness, particularly within the domain of friendship, something that was also evidenced in how young people in my study discussed these relationships.

Demir and Urberg (2004) note that adolescents rating high levels of conflict in their close friendships rated their friendship being of a lower quality. The effect of this was twice as strong for girls as it was for boys. Certainly, in my study, it was girls who spoke about the negative consequences of friendships for them: the feeling that friends needed to be “good” friends, wanting to avoid arguments, and feeling that arguments made them depressed. Demir & Urberg argue that this is consistent with previous literature: girls are more sensitive to conflict in relationships than boys; girls are socialized to avoid conflict and experience distress in relationship conflicts. They argue that girls are more likely to experience intimacy in relationships than boys, and that conflict directly affects intimacy.

Hussong’s (2000) study of adolescent friendship quality and emotional adjustment found that girls were more prone to depressive symptoms, consistent with most previous literature, and

potentially supported with my findings of this study, but caution needs to be exercised as it may be that it was not something that the boys discussed in the same way in my study. Shomaker and Furman (2009) found gender differences in adolescent friendships when handling conflict: girls were more likely to discuss difficulties in their relationships and displayed better communication skills in observed friendship interactions. Hussong (2000) argues that the relationships between qualities of friendship and depression and affect (emotion) was not straightforward. The ways in which some of the girls my study discussed how their friendships were associated with both positive and negative feelings is borne out when considering Hussong's findings. Hussong suggests that the quality of friendships were more important to adolescent adjustment than the quantity of friends, with both positive and negative aspects of friendships differentially affected young people's adjustment. However, Flynn, Felmlee and Conger's (2014) study indicated that having more friends, and greater levels of contact with those friends- being embedded in their friendship network- was associated with higher quality friendships.

Hussong calls for further research that considers the social context of these friendships, and emphasises the need for different research methods broaden our understanding of adolescent friendships. The need for research into perceptions of friendship experiences that extend beyond popular self-report questionnaires has also been made by Chow, Ruhl and Buhrmester (2016), highlighting it as a limitation of their own study. Chow et al.'s (2016) longitudinal study of adolescent friendships found that to a large extent, attachment with friends was relatively stable during adolescence, but feeling secure in friendships varies. They argue that these changes in attachment security are in part as a result of the relationship experiences with friends, including feelings of being excluded and lack of trust and support. Demir & Urberg realise that the perceptions that young people have of their friendships affects their emotional adjustment and that many of the popular quantitative measures do not

adequately allow for exploration of subjective feelings such as happiness and depression. Whilst these authors call for improved subjective measurements to explore this, I would further contend that methods allowing for young people to explore happiness in their own terms, as I have aimed to do in my study, illuminate and deepen our understanding of how important relationships such as family and friendships influence and are influenced by happiness and unhappiness.

5.5 OVERALL FINDINGS ON FAMILY, FRIENDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS

In some ways, these ways in which family and friends affected young people's happiness in this study overlap, and in other ways the relationships that young people have with their family compared with their friends are qualitatively different. These relationships, and the people they concern, have an important role in young people's happiness. This gives us an insight into the reasons *why* family and friends are important to young people, moving beyond noting that they are. Yet the complexity of these relationships with young people's happiness has also warranted exploration. Although family members and friends make young people happy, they also make them unhappy. This chapter has explored some of the ways in which they do this is.

Flynn, Felmler and Conger (2014) highlight the linked lives of young people: their entire social network is important for the formation and maintenance of social connectedness. Supportive relationships with family, friends and romantic partners facilitate caring, reliable and stronger friendships, and the lack of supportive relationships from their network in turn affects the quality of these relationships. As relationships with family and friends develop, and change, it is clear from the voices of young people revealed here, that the relative importance of their relationships are considered by young people. Importantly, the older

children have also begun to consider the normative expectations of what families ‘should be’ and how these normative roles may have implications for their happiness.

This chapter has illustrated that reflections and understandings about happiness include reflection and understanding about unhappiness, and that happiness and unhappiness do not sit at opposite ends of the spectrum; they are intricately interwoven in the feelings that young people have about the most important people in their lives. By unpacking the ways in which young people revealed how their closest people made them happy but also made them unhappy, this has broadened the discussion and knowledge about happiness and relationships and connectedness, and deepens our understanding about young people’s well-being.

CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF HAPPINESS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on children's happiness takes a eudaimonic perspective on how young people "should" be happy: engaged in self-improvement, being socially responsible, being goal oriented, achieving their potential (see Chapters 2 and 3). Hedonic well-being (experiencing positive emotions, pleasure and life satisfaction) is something that is recognised as being important to happiness in some way, but is less valued as a "worthwhile" part of happiness (see for example, Huta (2012)). In this chapter, I want to discuss some of the ways in which young people expressed enjoying being happy, and that how happiness is part of their lives in multiple yet individual ways. This is illustrated particularly in considering young people's experience of music.

Of the 672 items included on the happiness maps completed by 40 young people, over a third were mentioned by only one person, for example "Hot shower". A further 37 items were mentioned by only two people: examples include "Anime" and "Talking". Together, items only mentioned once or twice totalled 334 items (49.7%) of the happiness maps, illustrating the highly individual nature of what counted towards young people's happiness. The most frequently mentioned things from the happiness questionnaires were taken to the discussion groups for further discussion. Chapter 5 addressed the two most frequently mentioned: family and friends. Topics considered in the discussion group also included the next most frequently mentioned items: music, food, sport and pets. In both of the discussion groups, I asked if there was anything else that they were surprised wasn't there and they said sleeping and rest, and time to oneself. These were also frequently mentioned on the happiness maps.

There were two main themes that emerged from how young people discussed their experiences of happiness in the happiness maps and in the discussion groups. Firstly, young

people were aware of their physical and mental well-being. This encompassed consideration of how activities, experiences and rest contributed to an enhanced sense of well-being. Comfort, emotions, support, trust, empathy, stress release, and fitness were all contributory factors. Secondly, they gained interest and enjoyment from activities. Food, for example, could easily be conceptualised as something which fulfils hedonic happiness; for example eating as being for pleasure, and indeed there is evidence that this aspect of food was important for young people:

Daisy, aged 15: And food like, if it's *good* food, it's just like...I like that feeling of being full up and just...content, that's what I like

However, food was also experienced as a comfort; something that could make a bad day better; something that was part of a shared family experience, and something that could help you cope. Some researchers such as Delle Fave et al., (2011) have developed eudaimonic and hedonic inventories from lay persons' conceptualisations of happiness. However, attributing either a "hedonic" or "eudaimonic" categorisation to any phenomenon misses the complex and contingent nature of experiences of happiness, as this chapter will show.

I use the example of music to explore how it is experienced within young people's happiness. Talk of how music was enjoyed was rich, and illuminated many different aspects of young people's happiness. Lastly, I summarise that in order to understand the experiences of happiness for young people, it needs to be recognised that it is often contingent and is contextualised within people's lives.

6.2 MUSIC AND HAPPINESS

Adolescents have been found to be more passionate about music than older people. Although music is still important to people across the lifespan, it is more important in adolescence than

for other ages (Bonneville-Roussy, Rentfrow, Xu, & Potter, 2013). In my process of coding and analysis, I focussed on what it was about music- its qualities- that makes it important to happiness. I coded all instances of music being mentioned on the happiness maps, which circle they appeared in, and direct discussion of music (if any) in participants' reflections on their happiness maps. I then coded music discussions from the discussion groups and from the individual interviews.

Most of the time, young people included music on their maps as something that they listen to. This was separate from playing a musical instrument, and often (though not always) separately included from singing, or going to a concert. Thirty out of the 40 participants included music in their happiness questionnaires, and on their happiness maps. I also noticed that it was important for the group of five 15-year-old boys, who completed the questionnaires using particularly stylised street language. This group of boys did not tend to include many of the relational aspects of happiness that others did, but music was important to all of these boys. Of the 30 young people including music, 17 of these placed music in the circle closest to the centre, indicating that it was one of the things that was most salient to their happiness. All of the others except one (who placed it in the third circle away from the centre) placed music in the second circle, showing that it was still very important to their happiness. Music, bands and singers were mentioned across the maps. Music was not always reflected upon, but where it was, some themes emerged:

Personally identifying with the songs of bands; finding personal meaning in songs

Andrew, aged 15: The bands I wrote down, their songs are sometimes similar to me

Alex, aged 14: Bands/band members/music makes me happy because the songs they make are meaningful and really good

Feeling that music helps them

Gemma, aged 14: Shows that music helps me

Amar, aged 15: Music- to stay relaxed

Andrew, aged 15: Silence with the only noise being music

Music being motivational

Becky, aged 15: Music – it's motivating

Liking band members and feeling appreciated by them

Alex, aged 14: Some band members make me happy as they are good people and appreciate their fans

Music being an interest and providing enjoyment

Alex, aged 14: The things that make me happiest are people and music and sport I guess this shows that my hobbies and interests make me very happy although so do people.

Rachel, aged 14: In the next ring [circle 2] I put music because I like to listen to music a lot

Brandon, aged 15: Music was included in his list entitled 'What I love'

YM, aged 15: Music is what I study

Ella, aged 14: Singing in the car with my mum to Ice Ice Baby

Complex and contingent nature of music and happiness:

Paige: Music- singing makes me happy and I would like to perform when I'm older but I have stage fright so it comes with a lot of stress as well

Just as Paige had reflected in her happiness map on conflicting feelings about the role of music, specifically singing and self-confidence, so Sophie also disclosed a similarly complex relationship with music in the Year 10 discussion group.

Sophie: Music is my life.

[Others laughing a little]

Sophie: Yeah. I've been singing since I was two.

Cordelia: Oh, wow

[Some interruptions from others]

Cordelia: So music's something that you do...you do yourself? So what kind of...say a little bit more about how involved you are with singing or how important music is?

Sophie: Erm. ...Well...I used to... do singing erm, classes, and it was with someone that worked on the X Factor and he helped me a lot, he, he built my confidence up and...now...music...if I hear music I'll literally just...

Olivia: [interrupting] she'll just sing

Norah: If there's a song that comes on, I know she'll just will sing that song...to the top of her voice, everywhere she goes...and that's not a bad thing, that's a good thing

Cordelia: And you carried on with it then? So, do you still have singing lessons?

Sophie: No, er, erm I stopped because...it was £100 for a 30 minute lesson and it was each week

Unidentified whispering: You're kidding

Cordelia: Wow

[Others whispering]

Sophie: So it's £400 a month and then because my dad and mum stopped working we had to...stop some things

Cordelia: Yeah. And how much of an opportunity do you get to like...sing in school or stuff?

Sophie: Oh, I don't sing in school.

Cordelia: No...

Norah: She does in PE

Sophie: I do in PE cause I'm with my friends erm but, my confidence isn't *that* big like erm, if I was with my singing teacher, erm we did a concert and I sang in front of them people, but he was at the back of the room...and I felt really confident cause he was in there, so I knew that I wouldn't mess up. But, if he's not there, I'll mess up straight away.

Sophie's construction of her identity, confidence and competence is intimately bound up with singing. It is constricted by a lack of self-confidence, and where and with whom she feels she is able to sing. Casual singing in the presence of her friends is just about acceptable.

However, the prestigious singing lessons that she once had but her family can no longer afford define how she believes her singing should be. Her confidence was dependent upon her coach's presence and without him, and without the expensive singing lessons, she feels vulnerable and exposed.

6.2.1 The role of music in young people's emotions and feelings

In the discussion groups, young people discussed how music was important to their happiness in many different ways. In the Year 10 discussion group, music sometimes had a particular role in emotions as Daisy comments:

Yeah, I play music when I'm like sad

For others like Ella, music was part of the background to their everyday life:

Ella: I play it all the time, but I can't sing or dance or play an instrument. I just...yeah

Cordelia: But for listening to it?

Ella: Yeah- that's like, at least like, I have the walk to school, walk home and that's like all music, and then I get home and it's like just everyone's singing, even, you know like, yeah

Playing music walking to school also had a helpful- almost essential- function as described by Rachel:

I can't walk to school unless I've got music, I just find it so boring and I... if I don't have music to walk with, it will upset me, cause I get so bored, but if I have music to walk with, it'll make me more happy...you know, like kind of prepares me for a day at school

In the Year 11 discussion group, the functions of music to help express emotions and feelings were at the forefront of the discussion on the importance of music to their happiness.

Daniel: Music is way to reach part of you that nothing else can...there's [laughing as others laugh] some aspect of...

Jordan: [amidst laughter] Deep

Daniel: ...Oh dear! There's some aspect of music which can make you cry, there's some aspects which can make you laugh...There's some that make you wanna dance...and music evokes *every* emotion inside you that nothing else can

Lori: Sometimes it can, like, say things that you can't...like...understand you better, if that makes sense, do you know what I mean?...

Unidentified: Yeah

Lori: ... [Continues] Like sometimes some songs do it...like "you get me, others don't, but this song kind of knows what I'm on about."

Emily: Like relate to a song.

This echoes the theme of feeling a sense of personal identification with songs that emerged from the happiness maps, and also extends how young people perceived that music helps them. Music is depicted as having a unique ability to resonate with and accentuate emotion and feeling, and these attributes are part of how it is important to young people's happiness. Vittersø (2013a) argues that emotions and feelings have functions; both positive and negative emotions are needed for happiness as a good life. According to Vittersø (2013a), it is necessary to study the quality, hedonicity, and duration of feelings rather than just frequency of positive and negative emotions in order to understand how they affect well-being. The importance of music in accentuating emotion and feeling is further developed into attributes of music that effect physical change and facilitate the release of difficult emotions without having to talk to others, as shown later in the discussion group discussion:

Daniel: Some music you don't just listen to as well, you *feel* physically, because some music can change your heart rate, and that you feel...in beat with the music and it *makes* you feel because some music makes you wanna dance and some music makes you just have all of the emotions, it's not about the *feeling*, it's about the *being*...music.

Cordelia: Mmm

Holly: I think like it's human behaviour, kind of, to like music, because you know [laughs] ha, I dunno, like if I get sad, I just think of music. I think of music sometimes and I listen to it and it just makes me feel better by being *sad*...I don't know how that works, and if I listen to music when I'm happy...happy songs...and it makes me happier.

Emily: I think with like every...I think most people don't really like to show how they feel on the inside and then when they hear something they can connect with, it's kind of like a way to release it. Like you can listen to something and it can be, so like if a song connects with you, then you can listen to it, and you can play it out loud, and it's a way of getting your emotions out without actually saying anything

6.2.2 Managing music listening and happiness: private versus public

The second aspect of the Year 11 discussion group discussion on music and happiness centred on how music was listened to. This was described as either being for personal, private use, or music that you were willing to share with others.

Jordan: And I think as well, music links in so...like music's got this, quite personal private type of thing, the kind of music you listen to...you, you'd share it with people you're close to, like people your family members, your friends, and I think...the reason that at the ultimate level of bonding, you share music with each other that you know, mean...No, no-one knows I have the, the Taylor Swift album on my phone; no-one knows that!

[Others laugh]

Unidentified: They do now

Jordan: But no, no-one knows that...they do now! So... It's a personal, private thing to have music, especially if it's in your phone, your computer and you just listen to it on your own

Cordelia: So is that...? That's an interesting point about how you *are* listening to music- are you listening to it on your own, with headphones on, or are you listening to it, like...

Isabelle: I feel like you have two different albums for that

Lori: Yeah [half laugh]

Isabelle: Like an album for yourself and an album for when your friends are round, you're playing out loud

Jordan: Yeah, different play lists

Daniel [laughs]: Yeah

Mia: I don't really listen to music with *people*, I listen to it by myself as a way of escaping... and that makes me happy

The management of music sharing had to be negotiated: it could be a way of bonding with others, as described by Jordan above, but also it had the potential to expose young people to feelings of nervousness and embarrassment: the private becoming public and the accompanying uncertainty of the reaction they might receive from others when sharing their music tastes:

Holly: I feel, like, kind of *embarrassed* when I play my music choice to other people in the fear that they'll be like 'Oh, what you listening to like...'

Jordan: The Taylor Swift album

Holly: Because I like...

Cordelia: Yeah

Daniel: You feel nervous in case you...show someone music and they don't like it, and it's a song you really like, but another thing is, if you like big groups, say One Direction fans...they know...you *know* that you have *millions* of people who like the same music you do, so you're part of a community, so music doesn't just make you, like personally happy, it can create an entire community

Cordelia: That you feel part of?

Daniel: Yeah

As Daniel notes, personal identification with particular bands can also engender feelings of belonging to a wider community: although one's personal music taste might be difficult to share with friends, liking music that many others like can also make you happy.

6.2.3 Reflecting on the emerging themes of music and happiness within the context of previous studies

Using music across a continuum of wellbeing

In a critical review and theoretical synthesis of music psychology studies and music therapy studies, McFerran (2016) notes that music is often studied within the context of psychological problems within adolescence, with increased frequency of music listening often correlated with decreased well-being. In her criticisms of previous studies, McFerran argues that music listeners are represented either as active agents or as passive recipients. Such assumptions frequently position passive recipients as negatively affected by music in a depressive state,

and active agents experiencing positive emotions and using music in an optimistic way, or one that is associated with flourishing (for example connecting, enhancing and inspiring uses of music). Music therapy studies tend to focus on the functions of emotions and music: using music to express, be aware of and manage emotions.

Rather than polarising wellbeing and music use, McFerran suggests that instead young people are using music across a continuum of wellbeing that corresponds to how they are feeling at a particular moment in time. The same piece of music can evoke different emotions and feelings, and young people employ different strategies for music listening and emotional experience, some of which may be unconscious to them. The varied and sometimes contingent way that young people enjoyed and experienced music in my study resonates with McFerran's perspective. As well as music being described as a way to experience emotion and feelings more fully, it is also described as having physical effects. It is used in an uplifting way sometimes, as a way of bonding with others, as a means of alleviating boredom, and simply for the enjoyment of listening to music.

[Experiencing a variety of emotions from music listening](#)

Echoing McFerran's assertion of the predominance of research on music and pathological well-being in adolescence, Miranda and Gaudreau (2011) investigated the relationships between adolescent music listening and their subjective wellbeing (SWB) or happiness as an alternative approach. Following part of Diener's model of SWB (outlined above in Chapter 2), they focussed on the determinants of SWB as being higher levels of positive affect (positive emotions) and lower levels of negative affect (negative emotions). Miranda and Gaudreau (2011) proposed that adolescent music listeners can be characterised into three types, reflecting to varying degrees that people can experience both positive and negative emotions from listening to the same piece of music.

The majority of adolescents in Miranda and Gaudreau's (2011) study were 'emotionally limited listeners', characterised by reporting both lower levels of happiness and sadness from music listening. Miranda and Gaudreau argue that this suggests that listening to music for most young people does not engender strong emotional reactions. In my study, music was associated with young people's happiness in many different ways. It could be conceived as being part of the 'background' to their lives, for example how young people discussed listening to music on the way to and from school, in the car or at home. Although some consider and react to it deeply, for others, it is part of their lives that they simply enjoy for its own sake. Miranda and Gaudreau found that those who experienced more positive feelings of happiness from listening to their music also reported greater positive emotions. Some of the music listeners in Miranda and Gaudreau's study were emotionally positive listeners: reporting higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect from their music. They suggest, are suggest these listeners are those gaining peak experiences from their music listening, similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow (being immersed fully in the moment). Perhaps Daniel's description above of the total physical and emotional experience of music listening comes close to this; but Daniel is referring to "all" emotions, and not just positive ones.

For the young people in Miranda and Gaudreau's study who were "emotionally negative listeners", experiencing medium levels of happiness and higher levels of sadness from their music listening, they reported greater levels of negative emotions. Although in extreme situations, this negative state can have the potential for mental health problems, the authors maintain that it can provide emotional catharsis as well. Some of the young people in my study discussed how listening to music when they were sad was sometimes necessary: to reflect upon and recognise their emotions, to help cope, and to get their feelings out; in this

there are elements of catharsis. Being in touch with and knowing and feeling emotion is part of being happy for the young people in my study. It further illustrates how complex happiness is, and that it is changeable and contingent.

Functions of music and wellbeing are various and contextual

Music has been found to be part of young people's lives across multiple contexts, corresponding with the findings of my study (Papinczak, Dingle, Stoyanov, Hides, & Zelenko, 2015). Papinczak et al., reported that young people in a discussion group study self-selected music for different purposes in order to enhance their well-being. This was done in four main ways. Firstly, to build relationships, either through sharing music or through going to concerts and listening to music with others. In the Year 11 discussion group in my study, sharing music with others was described as a bonding process, although this was not straightforward and involved private versus public negotiations. Secondly, Papinczak et al., (2015) found that young people were using music to enhance their well-being by modifying cognitions: engaging with the music and the characteristics of the songs, achieving motivation and bringing memories to the fore with the music that they listened to. In my study, music was sometimes described as being motivational, and young people noted that the words of the songs reflected what they were feeling. In the Year 11 discussion group, the young people imbued music sometimes with a power to understand them, that was absent in other relationships. The third way that the young people in Papinczak et al.'s study felt that music helped them was in modifying their emotions. The authors note that this method of music aiding well-being was the most salient for the young people in their study. This was achieved by enhancing or restoring emotions through distraction or arousal, where music was either relaxing or energising. This is a similar finding to the use of music described by some of the young people in my Year 10 discussion group: they listened to music on the way to school in order to prepare for the day, and when walking to and from school to alleviate

boredom. The last finding of Papinczak et al. was that young people in their study improved their well-being by immersing in their emotions whilst listening to music. Specifically, they used it to intensify their emotions, rather than only modifying them. By experiencing emotions and feelings intensely from listening to music, it helped young people move on. Certainly in my study, the importance of being able to experience a range of emotions fully was expressed, and as Daniel describes, this experience can take a physical form as well as an emotional form.

Papinczak et al., (2015) aimed to test this “model” of music and wellbeing further in a quantitative study: looking at associations between operationalisation of the four themes and a measure of well-being. However, the only moderate correlation found was between modifying emotions and social well-being. No significant correlations were found between relationship building, modifying cognitions, immersing in emotions and well-being. The authors note that their measure of well-being was limited, and that this may account for the lack of significant quantitative findings. The themes that Papinczak et al. found in the qualitative study are consistent with research findings on the functions of music and the uses and gratifications of music according to the authors. I have noted similarities with some aspects of music and happiness noted by the young people in my study with the studies reflected upon in this section.

6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

I have used the example of music to illustrate how things that make young people happy do so in a variety of ways, functioning across the spectrum of well-being and facilitating the experience and expression of emotions. I have also noted again the intertwined relationship between happiness and unhappiness. Music does indeed offer a means by which young

people can experience and express complex emotions. I have tried to illuminate that music is also something that can be enjoyed just for its own sake, and that, when happiness is conceptualised and spoken about by young people, it does not always need to have a higher purpose and be associated with meeting goals. Sometimes simply enjoying things like music, food, sport- whatever is important for someone as an individual- is what happiness is. I would argue that dichotomising happiness into either “hedonic” and “eudaimonic” values and orientations, as in the numerous studies discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, misses the point that subjective experiences and enjoyment of happiness can encompass both of these at the same time, and that hedonism and eudaimonism can be represented by the same thing. It is the contextual and contingent nature of how happiness is experienced that affects how it is conceptualised for the individual at any one time.

CHAPTER 7: NARRATIVES OF HAPPINESS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter explores narratives of happiness for young people in my study, particularly those that were recounted in the four individual interviews. I had noted from the discussion groups (that had been conducted prior to the interviews) that young people perceived their happiness to change over time. This is explored in Section 7.2. In the subsequent four individual interviews that form Section 7.3, the young people discussed their experiences of happiness within the context of a broad life history narrative. The interviews began with me asking each person to tell me a little bit about when and where they grew up. This was followed by asking them about their experiences of happiness as a child, and now in the present, as well as how important happiness is to them in their future. These narratives illuminate how they constructed what happiness means for them, the ways in which they currently enjoy happiness, and how it is bound up with their negotiations of identity. I will return to their expectations of future happiness in Chapter 8.

7.2 PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN HAPPINESS OVER TIME

The young people in my study conceptualised that their happiness changes from the past to the present. For both Year 10 and Year 11 discussion groups, their happiness as a younger child was constructed as being much simpler, and more instantly achievable than their construction of happiness in the present:

Daisy: Um, I think as we get older we become, less...happy, like as a child you're so carefree, you don't have to revise, you don't have to have so much commitments. And as you get older, you become more mature, and responsible, and...There goes your happiness, I guess

Chloe: I feel like people expect more of you....erm, you have to keep adding loads of stuff onto that and you just don't feel as happy

Norah: Showing that you can be grown-up, not like your old self

Cordelia: So, happiness has changed...for a few of you, and you're thinking that you're *less* happy now? [Questioning to clarify] than you were, or is it just different?

Daisy: I think it's a different type of happiness...As a child, like simple things make you happy and as you get older, it's harder to find something that makes you happy.

Ella: It's like when you're young, you hated- like I hated- like going to bed and now that's like all I wanna do cause it's like, during the day I just wanted to play with toys, or my Barbies or whatever, and...Now you just wanna go to bed.

Changes in happiness are related to changes in the self: these are both developmental changes, as Norah describes, and changes in personal interests of things that can make you happy, as related by Daisy and Ella. Developmental changes of happiness were also discussed in the Year 11 discussion group. Crafter, de Abreu, Cline and O'Dell (2015, p. 86) note that from a cultural developmental perspective, people's identities consist of the past, present and the future, as well as self-concepts that move between present identities, and the self as an "extended other". These shifting identity positions are summed up by Norah, who distinguishes her happiness between that which was part of her "old self", and that of her present, which shows that she can be "grown up". There were further similarities in discussing how simple objects and activities had made them happy when they were younger:

Year 11

Cordelia: How does happiness change?

Jordan: Quickly

Daniel: There are different types of happiness

Lori: I think as you get older it changes, cos when you're younger, it could just be like drawing, or colouring something...as you get older it could be like going home for the holidays to see your like family if you haven't seen for a while. I think as you get older, it goes from being, like, superficial things and as you get older it goes to being...more...like...dunno

Emily: Harder work

Lori: Yeah, like more real things

Emily: It changes depending on your development...if that makes sense

Jordan: It's weird, cos I sort of think like, happiness isn't necessarily a thing that just happens, you need to *make* it happen...like, I just don't get happy randomly, I get sad randomly but I don't get *happy* randomly...I, I need to *work* to be happy...I need to like do something *first*, say if like as Daniel said ...Making someone else happy, then you know, to click...me being happy in return...It's something that you need to do before you can be happy, go and buy yourself some chicken for example, that makes me happy all the time

Being happy now was constructed as being more difficult across both of the year groups.

Happiness had to be earned; it was work, related to real life, rather than the playing activities of childhood. O'Dell, Crafter, de Abreu and Cline (2014) argue that transitions in children's lives are usefully understood from a cultural developmental perspective, that acknowledges that children's lives are not fixed, but constantly changing in relation to context and time. The transitions of happiness from simple to complex described by the young people in my study mirror the young people's own transitions from childhood to adolescence.

Lopez-Perez, Sanchez and Gummerum (2016) have highlighted that most research on children and young people's happiness has focused on the determinants of their subjective

well-being, rather than the different question of “what children understand by the term “happiness” (Lopez-Perez et al., 2016, p. 2432). Until very recently, lay theories of happiness have been absent from psychological research. Following on from adult lay conceptualisations of happiness, which concerned the dimensions of “the presence of positive feelings, autonomy or freedom, and (positive) relations with others” (Lopez-Perez et al., 2016, p. 2433), and limited previous research into children’s theories of happiness, the authors investigated and coded Spanish children’s definitions of happiness. They expected adolescents to express more abstract ideas about what happiness was compared with younger children, reflecting a developmental change in social cognition. Younger children were expected to theorise happiness in ways that were more hedonistic and concerning positive emotions. Furthermore, adolescents were expected to conceptualise happiness in ways that reflected autonomy, self-determination and freedom, relating to eudaimonic aspects of psycho-social development. The discussions on changes in young people’s happiness in my study reflect that they viewed happiness as changing on a developmental and social basis, both as a result of internal and external factors.

7.3 NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCING HAPPINESS

Similarly, in exploring more in-depth individual narratives of happiness experiences, these are also seen to be embedded within the context of young people’s lives.

Each of their experiences is different, situated, and centre on negotiations of identity.

Analysing narratives can allow us to explore personal experiences within several perspectives simultaneously: “By using a more systematic approach to the stories our participants tell us, we can begin to notice how identity and experience are constructed at the intersection of personal, interpersonal and cultural narratives” (Stephens & Breheny, 2013, p. 15).

According to these authors, there are different levels of narrative analysis which help uncover

how accounts are produced and the underlying social structures contained within them. At the *personal* level, how people describe and explain their experiences are analysed as narratives revealing how the self is linked to society. People are making sense of their lives and their identities. At the *interpersonal* level, narrative analysis is mindful that interviews are jointly constructed representations of events between the researcher and the interviewee. This perspective is in line with the social constructionist approach (Charmaz, 2014), acknowledging the role of the researcher in the construction of the data. The *positional* level of analysis is concerned with discerning the social context and power relations that shape how subjects (interviewees) position themselves within their narratives. Lastly, the *ideological* level attends to shared social beliefs and representations that surround narratives. The stories that are told explain a phenomenon or experience that is thus embedded within cultural narratives. Stephens and Breheny (2013) argue that separating these levels of analysis is difficult, as narratives often incorporate many aspects simultaneously, and therefore they recommend an integrated approach to analysing narratives. This perspective resonates with one of the key points that I want to make in this chapter, and in this thesis overall. This chapter is concerned with the experiences of happiness accounted for by young people. These are enjoyed, understood and embedded in their lives at many different levels, often simultaneously. From a researcher's perspective, comprehending what happiness is for young people, needs to interpret how it is accounted for by them within the context of their lives. Each interview is analysed separately, followed by a Section Summary.

Daniel, aged 16.

Daniel initially spoke of his present experiences of happiness, of what *counted* as happiness for him with a similar response to his initial discussion group answer, namely that making other people happy made him happy. Within the course of a few sentences however, this developed to also include the importance of achieving success in school.

As I mentioned in the, er, group interview, making other people happy makes me happy. If I manage to put a smile on someone's face, then it puts a smile on my face. I like knowing that I have made someone's day better by doing something. I like being with other people because I'm easy to talk to- so I've been told- (half laugh) and trustworthy, erm, yeah! That's the majority of what makes me happy and just being, successful and doing well in school, which I... [Whispers] kind of am.

Daniel reflected back values about himself that he had been told by others, and acknowledged his ability to do well in school. However, this aptitude sometimes came at a price of feeling overwhelmed, which resulted in feelings of failure.

Cordelia: And what kind of things do you enjoy doing at school?

Daniel: Erm [laughs] anything that's not hard! No- I enjoy every subject that I do ...it's just sometimes...it can get a bit much...and overwhelming...and...everything's buzzing around in my head...and I can't make sense of any of it. [Pause] So I just...kind of...fail....for about a week...and then I'm back to normal.

Daniel revealed coping strategies to overcome these negative feelings: withdrawal from social interactions, and being highly organised in order to minimise feelings of stress. These echoed an aspect of dealing with sadness that he had disclosed in the discussion group, "And if you are unhappy, you will purposefully do things to make you happy. You will use coping methods; you will listen to music, play sports, eat food..." Daniel used his knowledge of what worked for him, these actions or coping strategies, in order to regain control over stresses in his life.

Cordelia: And how do you pick yourself up after...you're going through a time where you're...finding it hard?

Daniel: Kind of...stop *talking* to people as much, maybe...for like a week...and just isolate myself, kinda...now

Daniel also spoke about the important relationships he had that made him happy, including his girlfriend, and his family. He did not speak in much detail about these relationships, but

implied that it was the existence of these relationships that made him happy. There was a physical manifestation of happiness that Daniel referred to, *making people smile*. This physical manifestation of emotion weaved through Daniel's construction of happiness: the physical experience of feeling evoked by music that he discussed in the discussion group, his happiness at making others smile, him smiling at the happiness *produced* in him by his family.

Cordelia: So if you were to think about what's really important to your happiness now, what things would- you talked about making other people happy- is there anything else that, you know, is really important to your happiness?

Daniel: I'd say my girlfriend

Cordelia: Yeah

Daniel: She is...wonderful...and makes me happy on a daily basis. Erm, and my family are really...happy...producing...and makes me smile every day.

It is interesting to note however, that after describing how these relationships made him happy, Daniel returned to the importance of his daily routine and structuring his external surroundings in order to be in control of his internal feelings. For Daniel, this restoration of external order is important to his internal happiness.

Daniel: I usually go out like, once a weekend, because, travel...obviously it takes me like 45 minutes to get *here* from her home. So, like sometimes, like the previous few weekends, my girlfriend's got a bus *to* my house, so I've obviously got her there. But I usually like Skype my best friend throughout the week, sometimes on weekends- Sundays and stuff. But I like to leave Sundays...*to me*, to sort out homework and stuff.

Cordelia: Yeah

Daniel: Just so I don't have any more stress in my life! [Laughs]

Cordelia: So, Sunday's the day where you focus on doing your homework?

Daniel: Yeah. I have a late day Friday, then Sunday, cos Saturday's usually taken up with other activities

Cordelia: And do you, um- how important are things like- organising your life?

Daniel: Um, very. Because if I have a...for example, if my room is messy, I will just *feel* messy. And if my work space is cluttered, I have to- I just have to clean it in order to make myself *feel*...efficient. Kind of like *seeing* a clean work space makes me happy (laughs). Being in an awful rubbish mess is just not nice.

Cordelia: So your personal organisation and everything is quite important to you?

Daniel: Yeah. I've got like, er, 50 folders, it's just like: section, section, section, put stuff in.

Cordelia: Yeah

Daniel: Keep it neat [half laugh].

Jordan, aged 16

Jordan had enjoyed making jokes throughout the Year 11 discussion group discussion. He would pick up a theme, for example, his love of chicken, and use this at regular intervals to make jokes. In his individual interview, he revealed why humour was important to him, how this had started, and how he continued to use it for his and other's happiness in the present.

Jordan had been talking about his early childhood; his parents had split up, remarried, split up again and they had moved around the country often because of his father's job. He spoke of his mother's distress when she had no-one to help her with her three children, and of how he and his siblings acted together to try to cheer her up. He talked of his own remembered devastation at seeing his mother upset. On one occasion around this time in his life, he discovered that he had an ability to make people laugh. This planted the seed of how he could use telling jokes to make others happy: this became what he could do to take away heartbreak and distress of both himself and others.

Jordan: Obviously it was hard to see my mum...my mum used to cry a lot. She...although she comes across...like, as I mean now, she seems quite strong and stuff, I, I would never see her cry *now*. But seeing her cry when I was *younger*...Obviously me being like six, seven, really was like heart-breaking to see her upset. But it was quite nice- all three of us would like gang up on her and then, try, try and make her happy again...which was always something that...we'd try and do. Cos I hated her being sad...cos it was like...

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: ...The *worst* thing

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: But...yeah...so everything makes me happy: I've always tried to be funny-funnier now than I ever was- oddly!

Cordelia: How do you think that- that's developed?

Jordan: I think, erm...it, it's strange. I've got stories, is the problem- that's why I ramble a lot, as you've noticed! [Laughs]I end up going off on strange tangents, and it makes people laugh...Th-the stories I tell. Some of them aren't that funny; some of them have – are very funny...um...but, it, it varies, and...obviously...my mum used to tell me a lot of stories anyway, which- I don't remember a lot of stuff from about seven downwards. I remember on my 7th birthday we stayed up till midnight so I could turn seven- I think it was in the holidays. My mum...and I went "Oh, I'm seven now- *ridiculous!*" And then everyone just started laughing...I used to love the feeling of...everyone laughing, erm, at something I'd said. So I think that definitely...encouraged me...

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: ...To make people laugh *more*. It doesn't always work!

Cordelia: Yeah

Jordan: ...A lot of the time it doesn't work. But...I like the feeling. Nothing makes me happier than saying something funny and people laughing at it...since...as long as I can remember really.

Making and telling jokes were a work in progress for Jordan. He recounted how he used it to “show” and “express” emotion. Jordan told jokes to act as a barrier to letting himself “get to the stage” of experiencing distress. He wanted others to see him as funny, rather than let it show that he was unhappy or stressed.

Jordan: I’d say it was a much better way of...expressing emotion than...anything else. It’s like, it’s easier to show that you’re happy than to show that you’re like stressed out, or depressed or anything, so I think you know...especially for other people as well like, you- if people see you and you’re there making jokes all the time, people very rarely see you as being...sad outside of...the conversation- and outside of school and stuff. So I find, just to be funny...is a good way of...showing emotion...like personally I’m...

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: ... not a very sad, upset person, I don’t- I don’t get to that stage. I just end up...reminiscing of stuff to make me laugh! [Half laugh]... a couple of days ago, and then start laughing

Cordelia: Yeah

Jordan: Um, like I remember being in bed, um the other day, I was just sort of...just randomly s- sat there and I just started laughing, just could not stop laughing, and I don’t know why, I just...I, I don’t even remember what it was now- it might was something to do with the film that me and my friends had watched – and he was just there like “Dude! I’m trying to sleep! Please be quiet!” And I, I just couldn’t stop laughing and, erm, he ended up laughing, and then we both fell asleep a few minutes later, and er, it, it was great. Um...but I’m not a very, very sad person. I’m very upbeat, trying to make everyone else laugh

Cordelia: Yeah

Jordan: It’s quite hard sometimes, ‘cause some of what I say, I find funny myself, so I end up laughing whilst trying to tell people and it ruins the joke! And it’s like “You’re just laughing at your own joke now”

Jordan’s narrative of how he used humour and joke telling as a way of managing emotion can be contrasted with his complex and emotional relationship with football. Whilst humour sealed his emotions over, football facilitated a release of positive and negative emotions for Jordan. In the discussion group, I had asked the group to tell me more about sports and happiness:

Jordan: I get very um, I'd say both emotional and I'm very, very committed to football and stuff...main, mainly because I'm the captain, I kind of have to be, but, um, sort of it, it makes me happy *and* sad...it's kind of like, you know, a, a good-evil kind of thing because I love going, and I love doing stuff, but we always lose, so I don't like *that* bit, um, but yeah, I, I, I like, I love doing it, it's great and ev-everyone there's awesome...they all like me, which is obviously new, I have more friends on Facebook as well...[joking]

In his individual interview, the discussion returned to the importance of football. His love for it had begun early: playing football in the park with his brother and his step-dad of the time, which was one of his favourite activities. He constructed this retrospectively as a positive aspect of his parents' separation:

Jordan: My dad was never big into football, so it kind of *worked* that I lived with my mum, who *was* a big football fan, who I could talk football with...

Jordan acknowledged that football was a very big part of his life, but he did not normally talk about it as much as he did in the interview, because most of his friends were not football fans. He said he didn't mind this, as it was "his thing" but the implication was that he usually kept football and school life separate, and managed them as such. Being made captain of his football team had had a huge impact on Jordan's self-esteem, both on and off the football field. However, the accompanying responsibility of captaincy still had the potential to undermine how he felt he could be viewed by others.

Jordan: I'm the captain of my football team, which I think is like...honestly it was...my most proud moment I've ever had when I, I was given this armband to wear, and just the stupidest thing I've ever felt because... I was playing first in the league team, and I was given an armband, and I was there just like "Woah!" I, I *loved* it ...because it was like- it reminded me that I, I'm not as bad as I think I am! [Half laugh] Um, well at least I *can't* be as bad as I think I am! Because, well you wouldn't make someone who was bad the captain of a team. It was always great, it really boosted my morale and...it inflicted on my results on stuff in school, and it...made me feel as though I could do a lot better than I currently *was* doing...and then my team kept losing games! [Half laugh] And I was like "Could this be blamed on me?"...

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: ..."I hope this can't be blamed on me".

Being part of a football community extended to following a football team, and going to football matches. Jordan described his happiness in being immersed in the crowd, and contributing to the atmosphere at a football match. He immediately contrasted this with his performance and position as a footballer in his own team, and revealed how some of the relationships that he had to negotiate on the football field were challenging for him.

Jordan:...Spectating is great, because- especially when you're at the ground as well, cause everyone's singing, everyone's getting into the mood, you can just- you can be the person who *starts* chants and stuff, which I *love* starting...I've got a very loud voice, so I love just bellowing something, and everyone else repeating it. And it's just- it *is* an amazing feeling being there. But playing is just...cause I...I, I don't really have a position, which I know is bad. But...technically I'm a goalkeeper, but we have two goalkeepers for my team...so...I say...well, the other goalkeeper's a bit better than I am, so I say "Well, if you go in goal I'll play..." Well, I let my manager decide where I am, where I play...

Cordelia: Mmm

Jordan: ...And I've got myself a couple of assists this season, and stuff, so it, it's always- it's lovely to go, go into a game and just start playing. S-some of the referees have been quite horrible, which, you know, immediately you think as a Captain "Ah, no! [Half laugh] It's the worst thing in the world". I remember going to a game and the opposing Captain refusing to shake my hand 'cause we had a little argument in the last game, which I was disgraced by. ...Um, so...as...at the end of the game when we beat them 3:0 I, I went up to the Captain and just like slapped him on the face, and then p-patted him away and he got really angry with me, which....again I, I, I probably shouldn't have done. But, it's just sort of...s-something that you just- it's instinct that you *do*- I, I, yeah, I just love football games, and I love playing it, so it is a very big part of my life, part of my happiness in general.

Jordan's reaction after beating another team is the opposite of traditional sportsmanship. He is "disgraced" by his own behaviour in physically confronting the opposing captain, but explains his reactions as being instinctual. I would argue that football provides Jordan with an arena for him to behave in an instinctual way, to experience fully highs and lows of emotions, and that this contrasts with how he carefully manages all of his emotions with the use of humour away from football. Jordan ended the discussion on football with summarising its importance to his life and happiness overall. For Jordan, he has two sides to experiencing happiness that are separately managed and negotiated.

Norah, aged 15

Norah responded to the question about her experiences of happiness as a child in her current identity as a dancer. She explained how she had travelled abroad with her dance school and performed in New York. Dancing was very much part of her life, and I asked her more about what made her happy about her dancing. There were two aspects to dancing that contributed to Norah's happiness: facilitating stress release in a physical way, and receiving social support from people at her dance school. The security of knowing she was able to go to her dancing in order to release stress or gain support was very important to Norah.

Norah: Like, if I feel stressed at home, and I *know* I can go- like go to my dancing, I know I can take like how I feel out *on* my dancing. And like, I've always got support if I needed to tell someone something. It's better than just telling my mum and dad all the time.

Cordelia: Mmm. Yeah

Norah: But it makes me happy. I've got friends outside of school as well...that do it with me...

Cordelia: Yeah

Norah: ...So I see a lot of them

Family relationships, including spending time with her brother and her wider family were a big part of Norah's past and present experiences of happiness (see Chapter 5). For Norah, a sense of identity and belonging to close communities- the dancing community and a big family community - were central to her happiness. Norah revealed that she was dyslexic in her interview, and the challenges this presented her with in school. She was determined to overcome them, and drew upon her cousin's experience of dyslexia as an inspiration to get through it, as the school were not supporting her.

Norah: Cause I'm not getting what they help me with, but...

Cordelia: Mmm

Norah: ...I'm fine on my own. I, I *know* I can *do* it...my *cousin* got through it, so I *must* be able to get through it.

The resolve to be able to do things, and to facilitate others being able to do things underpinned Norah's narrative on happiness. Although Norah often moved between the past, present and future when talking about her life, she drew upon examples and challenges experienced by members of her family as resources for herself.

Norah: I like looking after- like my mum works with special needs children, so I like doing what she does, like looking after children and that. And I just like to help them out...and find stuff that they like to do. And with the...like, with my dancing, I'd like to carry it on until I get older. Like helping people that...have never danced before, knowing how they can do it.

Providing opportunities for everyone to experience things in life that had either been difficult or even denied to them was integral to how Norah spoke about happiness. This perhaps reflects her own struggles and those she had witnessed in her family. Norah's vision of happiness was to turn struggles around, to defeat them and to open up horizons for others.

Norah: I dunno, I have- like, my dad, and my grandad, and I have dyslexia, so like, my dad finds it really hard to do stuff. So I would like...to help them to get over stuff they don't like doing, and making sure that they can do stuff that *they* wanna do that makes them happy. So...and I have like a cousin who's disabled that never, ever learned how to play football, and never ever learned, like she's never learned to do dancing or anything. So I'd like to do something that...*everyone* could get involved in and not just certain people.

Norah also enjoyed more everyday experiences of happiness with her friends. She thought of herself as a happy person, who could be made happy easily. She smiled frequently, particularly in the following exchange at the end of the interview, but her closing remark about being happy "until something happens" was a reminder that Norah always had to meet challenges to overcome that could affect her happiness.

Cordelia: And what sort of things do you like doing with your friends?

Norah: Shopping

Cordelia: Mmm

Norah : Erm, like, ha- like, sleepovers...just like...going to the cinema...just like having a normal conversation...like whenever we can...like I know we're not meant to do it, but like messing around in class sometimes (smiling)...erm, stuff like that.

Cordelia: And those type of things make you happy?

Norah: Yeah

Cordelia: OK. And is there anything else that you can think of that makes you happy?

Norah: Dunno...Everything makes me happy really. I'm always, I'm always happy until, like...something *happens*.

Rachel, aged 15

My interview with Rachel had to be conducted at the back of a classroom where some older pupils were having an extra study group with a teacher. Rachel was shy and found speaking difficult. It was very off-putting for her to have the other people in the room, as she was conscious of what she was saying, especially when they weren't in their own discussion and our conversation could be heard. Rachel often responded to questions about her happiness by choosing to focus on how happiness had changed for her, or by discussing her unhappiness instead. Being given little responsibilities by her parents when she was a child had been part of her happiness, but Rachel now viewed these as chores.

Cordelia: And what about your experiences of happiness now?

Rachel: I think they've *changed*. I think that *now* if my parents asked me to go to the shop, it would be like *effort*. I don't *want* to.

Cordelia: Mmm

Rachel: But I know I *have* to. Like...being outside isn't necessarily...as much fun anymore. Because now it's not like...going out and ...building forts and that, it's like going out to *see* people

Cordelia: Mmm

Rachel: And it's not as much fun.

Cordelia: *Not* as much fun seeing people?

Rachel: Exactly

Rachel described how the experience of being outside had lost its enjoyment because she could no longer have the adventures of her earlier childhood. Instead going out of the house

has become associated with seeing other people, with the implication that these were not people that she would choose to spend time with, and that she was conscious of this not being *fun* for her.

I returned to asking Rachel about her present happiness. She had spoken about enjoying playing outside with her friends when she was younger, having adventures near where she lived in an area with lots of grassland away from many roads. There were echoes of this in her present experiences of happiness in going to the parks with her friends. Alongside this, Rachel even mentioned the same activity of going to the shop that she had enjoyed being responsible enough to do when she was a child. For Rachel, the happiness associated with the activity of going to the shop was contingent on the volition she had over it. If she had the independence to choose going to the shop with her friends, it was an activity she enjoyed, whereas if her parents asked her to go for them, it was compulsory and not enjoyed.

Cordelia: So what sort of things, erm, make you happy now?

Rachel: I think...kind of being out with my friends...makes me happy

Cordelia: Yeah

Rachel: Kind of to have that sort of *independence*...of what I wanna do

Cordelia: Yeah. So tell me a little bit more about what you do when you're going out with your friends?

Rachel: Erm, we generally just like go to the shop. Or like...we'll go to the parks and that. I think it's generally we have a lot of fun just sort of making jokes...and stuff. It's like...I dunno, it just makes me happy.

There were more echoes of the kinds of things that Rachel had enjoyed in her childhood being revisited in a different way as part of her present experiences of happiness. Rachel's love of having outdoor adventures was now fulfilled by being in the Army Cadets.

Rachel: I think it's like they- they train you in the same way as they train the military, except for like, it's...more kid base...like we have six years rather than the six weeks that the Army would. They do like things I've always been interested in. Like I've never been one of these girly girls that sit in their room and...do make-up. I like being out in the rain, and the mud...and like really weapon training, and stuff like that.

Cordelia: Yeah...and, so you've been in it for a year and how long are you...going to plan to stay in it for?

Rachel: I'd like to stay in it till...Like I think you get to stay in it till you're like 18

Cordelia: Yeah

Rachel: They give you ranks and stuff, and like you can come back as staff, and you'll get paid for doing it. And I wanna do it as a part time job type of thing.

The Army Cadets enabled Rachel to do things that she had always enjoyed. Rachel aligned her identity with being an Army Cadet in direct contrast to an alternative available identity of being an indoor "girly-girl" who "do make-up". Rachel spoke of how she wanted to achieve her Duke of Edinburgh award through the Cadets, rather than through school where they also ran the programme. In Chapter 5, Rachel's unhappiness with friends at school was discussed, and how she explained that she was happy by *not* being at school. Rachel had disclosed how she did not mind exams, and that part of this was being able to sit on her own at school:

I prefer them in a way. It's like I'm sat on my own little table...and I just enjoy it. I don't mind exams, like they've *never* stressed me out.

In Rachel's narrative of her experiences of present happiness, there remained much that was implicit: the importance of choice, including who she wanted to spend her time with (her

friends from outside of school and likeminded peers from Army Cadets) versus those that she did not enjoy spending time with (people at school and people that she *had* to visit in her home life). Secondly, freedom and independence were integral to Rachel's happiness. Her commitment to the Army Cadets could be seen as surprising, given the value that Rachel placed upon independence. It illustrates perhaps that notions of happiness are not fixed and can mean different things across contexts. These were changing as she grew older, and she had to adjust to those changes. Nonetheless, there remained the happiness she gained from being outdoors that was revisited in different ways, many of which were still grounded in pastimes of childhood, as illustrated in the final excerpt below when Rachel was talking about family holidays that she still enjoyed.

Cordelia: Yeah- what is it you like about that area?

Rachel: I always go there with the thought that I can just *leave* my house, and I can go out on the beach and build sandcastles.

7.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Stephens and Breheny (2013) note that people often use personal stories to explain their experiences. Life histories and significant life episodes recounted by individuals enable the development of a sense of identity, crucial to the adolescent period, to be traced (Erikson, 1980, p. 118). The present experiences of happiness told by the four young people are all different, and all embedded within a growing knowledge of the individual, cultural and social identities available to them. As discussed in Chapter 5, Erikson (1963) proposes that individuals have to resolve a series of ego crises before they can move on successfully to the next period of their lives, with adolescence the stage where the young person resolves the crises of "Identity vs. Role Confusion". Erikson (1980, pp. 119-120) writes that adolescence

is the concluding period of childhood, wherein identifications made in childhood are absorbed into a new identification of who the adolescent will be in their emerging adulthood. Adult roles will be prescribed by the society in which young people are growing up, and society needs to recognise and value adolescents' new identity formation. Society needs to give "function and status" to young people to enable them to successfully make sense of their "growth and transformation."

In the four narratives of experiences of happiness above, different identities are being negotiated. Daniel is trying to resolve how he manages personal costs accrued in being successful in school, manifested by experiences of stress, with contrasting social identities. On the one hand, in order to cope with his stress, he turns inward and withdraws from social interactions, seeking control over his external environment. On the other hand, he would like to be seen as the person who makes others smile, who is easy to talk to, whom he readily smiles at in return. Jordan is operating two contrasting versions of emotion management, both of which give him two separate social identities; one which is sometimes *over-emotional* and unpredictable, but is instinctual and also has the potential to increase as well as decrease his sense of self-worth. The other covers up all of his own emotions with humour, and allows Jordan to entertain, make others laugh, and even rescue them from distress. For Norah, her sense of identity is closely bound up with being included and belonging to communities. The challenges she sets both for herself and others is to overcome being *excluded*, particularly from many differing forms of disability and disadvantage. Rachel's earlier childhood identifications with who she is and what she enjoys are integral still to her adolescent identity. It is the amount of autonomy and independence that is available to her to experience who she is in the way she wants to do it that has to be negotiated with the social structures and authorities that govern her life.

These personal stories of experiences of happiness reveal how young people understand who they are; they are concerned with identity. Yet the analysis of these stories at the interpersonal level needs to recognise how they have been reproduced between the young people and me as the researcher. Their stories have been interpreted, and jointly constructed meanings have emerged in the analysis. This analysis also incorporates the positions that the young people being interviewed took, and the position that I occupied as a researcher.

Having to conduct the interviews within the school, and the interviews themselves occurring in adult spaces, such as staff rooms, or at the back of teacher-led study groups, influenced how the young people saw me and responded within the interviews. I was both of and yet not of the structure and authority of the school. In the narratives of happiness, there are also social beliefs and representations that implicitly underpin constructions of happiness: the importance of academic achievement in becoming a successful adult; personal responsibility and endeavour central to managing difficulties and challenges; the privileging of autonomy and choice; the unacceptability of (irrational) emotional and instinctive behaviour; in short many of the prerequisites for neoliberalist success that Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001, p. 178) term the “bourgeois subject”. These social and cultural mores inform and pervade young people’s understanding of what is acceptable and desirable, and as such, should be acknowledged as contributing to their constructions of happiness.

CHAPTER 8: FEELINGS AND SUBJECTIVITIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I want to engage with young people's feelings about things that are affecting their happiness now and in the future, as well as the meanings and importance of happiness. Section 8.2 explores young people's sensitivities to the structurally determined choices they must undertake in determining their futures, and how these are affecting their present happiness. It considers these as part of their subjectivities, and critically examines the reality of "choice" and happiness. In section 8.3, the meaning and importance of happiness to young people is brought to light. Section 8.4 argues that the expectation that young people should be happy can also result in them pretending to be happy at times. Lastly, in Section 8.5, the themes of happiness discussed in this chapter are brought together and reviewed in the context of their lives.

8.2 CHOICES, TRAJECTORIES AND HAPPINESS

Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) explored what it meant to be a girl growing up in England in the 1980s-1990s in their book *Growing Up Girl*. Concentrating on the girls' subjectivities- their gendered and classed lived experiences- the book explores how the girls engaged in practices of self-invention in psychological, sociological and cultural ways, which are deeply entwined. Arguing that lives are embedded in social and cultural practices, Walkerdine et al. (2001, p.15), maintain that it is understanding the "...situated and specifically local character of how people live and transform their lives that is important. Framing their approach as psychosocial, they argue that ordinary (particularly working and lower middle class) people are bound to their own psychological projects of remaking and self-invention in order to survive in a modern era of uncertainty "when it is no longer

possible to know who, what or where you are supposed to be” (Walkerdine et al., 2001. p.10).

Writing this thesis some sixteen years after the publication of *Growing Up Girl*, the practices of self-invention and transformation and the accompanying challenges that they present to young people today, in the here and now, have been thrown into relief. Choices pertaining to the future project of the self are impacting on young people’s happiness in the present. In speaking to the young people in this study at a critical time in their lives (for the Year 11 students, this was the week before having to submit their A level choices at school), the uncertainty, difficulties and associated anxieties of how they will negotiate this making of themselves are highlighted in their construction of happiness.

Choice- and its relationship to happiness- were perceived very differently between the discussion groups in Years 10 and 11.

In Year 10 choice was something that was appreciated and desired:

Cordelia: What do you think about choice? How much choice you have- how does that affect happiness?

Rachel: I think now that you’re older, you’re more responsible, so we have more choices to do what we want. And we have like more of a choice to go out and choose what type of things we want to do, so if we want...I would arrange to choose what we’re interested in, we can do that more

Cordelia: Yeah. [Pause] Anyone else?

Norah: I think if I don’t choose something that I like doing it makes me feel a bit...upset cause like...I wouldn’t mind if I was with people and they liked to do one thing, I’ll do it, but if it’s just me on my own but I have to choose between something and something, I think I’ll go to a thing that’ll make me more happy, not something that wouldn’t.

Whilst for Rachel, choices are seen as positive: having responsibility and allowing her freedom in being able to choose her own interests. In her individual interview (see Chapter 7), choice and responsibilities were integral to her present experiences of happiness. Norah also sees the benefit of choice and happiness; she is happy to make compromises for others,

but when it is just for her, choices can make her happy if she likes to do it and unhappy if she doesn't.

By contrast, in the Year 11 discussion groups, choices are problematized as stressful, fraught with difficulties and requiring knowledge of things beyond what the young people know now. Life trajectories are constructed as being dependent upon making the "right" choice *now* about what they want to do in the future. There is not time to reflect on their dreams and aspirations, and any decision made needs to be flexible enough to cope with changing circumstances that may arise. Jordan is worried about not knowing what he wants to do and similar anxieties are voiced by others in the group:

Cordelia: So when you're thinking about the *future*...do you think about happiness?

Daniel: Depends who you...

Lori: Nah. You think about stress before you think about happiness

Mia: I don't think so because...it's hard to take a future and kind of like decide what you want to be happy because school *rushes* us...so when you think of your future, you think of your dreams and stuff...but if you're rushing, your dreams are gonna change, and you're not gonna have the right things to get there

Isabelle: So...you've gotta be prepared for change as well cos you never know what's gonna happen

Jordan: [quietly] I don't like change

Holly: I don't know what I want to do in life. It feels like the school's pressuring me to...decide what I want to do. I just switch from choices to choices, I can't seem to find anything and...all my sisters, they've got jobs now...they figured out what they wanted to *do* in their mid '20s...I feel like we should be given a second chance at our education. If I could come back at to the 6th form at 25, I *would* because then I could figure out what I wanted to do

Jordan: I think as well like I, I don't like, all my friends, like more or less know what they want to do when they leave school...especially when they leave school, they might go on to do A levels, and a career...that leads to a career path they might have. Or they might be going to college to do, I dunno, some sort of something that specialises in the job that they want. But, because I *don't*, I'm just "Oh, I'll just go to 6th form", and I've just chosen random A levels that I might- that might help me in the future somehow, like Maths- I've chosen A level Maths- I don't know why, I'm not very good at Maths, but even still, I'm in set 2 for Maths, chose A level Maths because I thought "Well, that, that would look quite good on a CV". I'm sort of building layers for myself: you know my GCSEs, then my A levels, then my driver's licence...Then, I'm, I'm gonna go to college, hopefully by, by then I'll know what I *wanna* do, and then possibly go to university...and *then* get a job...when I'm 53! [Others laugh] Because then I might have an idea

The structure of the educational system is central to the stress and unhappiness discussed by the young people here. Similar criticisms are also being voiced by some senior figures within education. Writing in the Times Educational Supplement (TES), David Hughes, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, described how the current system of post-16 choices is failing young people. Citing lack of support for them to understand the available options; pressure to make potential career-defining choices at the age of 15 and 16, whilst simultaneously not having had the opportunity to try out meaningful options beforehand; overt encouragement towards A levels and higher education, despite this not always being the best route for all young people (leading to dropping out of A levels half way through the course). In short, Hughes (2017) demonstrates an awareness of some of the same issues choices and the future problematized by the young people in my study.

Matthews, Kilgour, Christian, Mori and Hill (2015, p. 669) argue that young people's well-being is multi-faceted, indicating that "This diversity is pivotal to understanding the potential for subjective well-being among young people to be influenced by important but transient issues" One of these "transient issues" affecting the well-being of the young people in Matthews et al.'s (2015) study was anxiety expressed by all students that related to periods of transition in their lives. For younger students, this anxiety related to moving to secondary

school. For the pupils in Years 9 and 11, pupils were anxious about their exams and their future following the end of compulsory education. These anxieties are similarly voiced by the young people in my study. Matthews et al., (2015) argue that schools should rise to the challenge of promoting well-being over both the short and the longer term, specifically for the transition period from school into early adulthood. For the young people in my study, particularly those in Year 11, the current educational system which they term “the school” is rushing them into decisions that they do not feel equipped to make. Matthews et al., (2015) couch this as an argument between the importance of children’s well-being in the present (a children’s rights issue) versus issues which negatively affect children’s wellbeing (a developmental issue). However, I would argue that evidence from my study highlights how concerns about the future and the available pathways to that future are also adversely affecting young people’s happiness now.

Pathways into the future are deemed to be ‘properly’ achieved through A levels/further education and thence via a university degree. In England, the UK government has set a target that 50% of young people should go to university (Rose & Baird, 2013). Rose and Baird comment on how education is pitched as an example of meritocracy and social mobility; however the notion of meritocracy has moved from being one of “equal opportunities” to one of “personal responsibility” in terms of UK policy (Rose & Baird, 2013, p. 158).

Raising aspirations to attend university has become part of the UK’s political agenda, and is furthermore explicitly associated with the UK government’s perceptions of young people’s hopes of future happiness: “Raising awareness of how higher education can support individual aspirations for happiness and security may help make it a more attractive proposition to those with ability who are not currently progressing to higher education” (Department for Education, 2017, p. 11) .

The “proper” nature of these pathways was highlighted in the individual interviews with the two Year 10 girls, Norah (who wanted to be a special needs teacher like her mother) and

Rachel:

Cordelia: So what kind of...route might you take to get there?

Norah: Er, I'd do...I'd do a Teaching Assistant's first, just to make sure if I like it...properly. And then if I do, I'll take the next step of training to be a teacher.

Cordelia: Yeah. And where would you do that?

Norah: Erm, well I'd do it...in _ College.

Cordelia: So would that be...

Norah: Or...

Cordelia:...Instead of sixth form?

Norah: Aft- I wanna go to 6th form. If I can get the grades that I would need in Year 11, I'd come back to 6th form. And then either go to college or university.

Rachel: I'd like to go into something like medical care, like paediatric care...with children.

Cordelia: Yeah

Erm, and how do you plan to get to that... stage?

Rachel: I think I want to take A Level chemistry or something which you have to do. The University of Northampton is supposed to be kind of like good for like...doctor kind of stuff...

Cordelia: Mmm

Rachel: ...So I want to go there. And do like Medical Sciences or something like that.

Cordelia: Yeah

So you've al- you've done some research already on that?

Rachel: Yeah

Cordelia: And what other kind of subjects do you think you need to do?

Rachel: I think it's kind of like Maths is quite important for it as well.

Cordelia: Yeah. And are those subjects that you're interested in?

Rachel: I'm interested in Chemistry but I, I really struggle with my Maths. It's like...I can do it, but I never remember what to do...when it comes to the exam. But like I do try and get better at it, because I know that it's something that I want to do.

Conceptualising aspirations as a combination of personal and social factors, Rose and Baird (2013) asked young people in Years 11 and 13 about their goals, hopes and plans for the future, in addition to asking what they wanted to do in the future (as a career). Although most of the students in Rose and Baird's study responded to questions about their aspirations in terms of further education or career (with a minority responding in terms of personal development and interest), the majority did not believe that doing well in school on its own would help them achieve their aspirations. Despite educational attainment being important to the young people in Rose and Baird's study, it was not perceived as being enough to make them happy or to gain the career they would like in the future. Students indicated that schools had both helped and hindered them personally (related to seeing them as individuals and in possessing agency), in their education and in their career choices. It is worth noting that the survey data in Rose and Baird's study was from 2009/10, when the school leaving age was 16; it is now 18 in England. The authors point out that whilst education and careers are important to young people, so too is happiness and fulfilment- something that the authors comment is absent from most literature on young people's futures, which tends to concentrate only on educational and career trajectories. Echoing this, in the Year 11 discussion group in my study, Isabelle and Emily interject the discussion on school choices and happiness, with happiness itself being a choice that one needs to make in life.

Emily: I think you...*have* to choose happiness. There's some things in life which you can't choose to happen...and that affects whether you're happy or not. But then, even around those situations, you can still *choose* to do stuff which makes you happy

Isabelle: Happiness is a choice. Like you can choose...like...you can choose what mood you're in. Like, there are, you can, like you were saying with the music- you can choose what playlist you wanna listen to and whether that's gonna make you happy or sad

Predominantly however, the Year 11 conversation concerned the pressures associated with having to make life choices, simultaneously feeling ill-equipped or held back in doing so:

Jordan: There's things like- there's too many choices to me. There's, there's far too many. Like I didn't *choose* my GCSEs. I, I didn't choose any of my lessons that I did, I- they were chosen for me by teachers in this school...who didn't know me at all. Cos I was new when I came into Year 9. So I had my choices- I got put into lessons that they thought I might be good at, based on my appearance, which, um...hasn't gone...very well to be honest But um, um, it's, it's, there's a lot of choices to make- afterwards. As soon as you leave school though, there's so many options to choose. There's sixth forms, college, there's apprenticeships. There's all of them, and then you finish *those*, so again there's just so many choices. Choices whether you get- whether you learn to drive, where you live, *where* you drive, where you live, what job you want, where you wanna be- where d'you want this job to be. Some of those you don't have a choice in, like where do you want the job to be, that's just unlucky, but there's so many places, you, you don't *have* to stay here. That's, it's like the weird thing. People think that if they stay here, they, they'll be better, um, but like, my dad keeps pressuring me to go and live with him. And when I leave 6th form because he thinks, well, everything's cheaper...up here...so just live here instead. I'm like "Yeah, but also jobs are not as goo- not as well paid". It's very...there's a lot of...there's too many choices to make, especially if I'm, especially cos, first cos I'm 16...I, I don't even know *most* stuff, like about anything, but I'm expected to make so many choices...*Now*...and I haven't made any! [Half laugh]...So...Yeah

Daniel: So like, I dunno, in some arguments that my parents bring up, the fact that I'm not *experienced* enough, and I'm not old enough to *know* about certain things...Like, but I *physically can't* because of my age, but there's nothing you can do about that. Age isn't a *choice*, it's just...er...an experience...not, you can't increase your own age, and you can't decrease your own age. Sure you can deceive people, and you can like wear make-up to make yourself look younger or older, but there's nothing you can *do* for lack of experience, other than...experience life!

Choice, knowledge and experience are problematized here. These are age related choices that also are determined to be life trajectory choices. Uncertainty and fear of making “the wrong decision” are negatively impacting young people’s happiness. At this crucial time, it is less the school exams themselves (although they were described as inherently stressful in the Year 10 discussion group) that are problematized. Rather, it is a decision about their future prescribed by a particular academic and or vocational pathway that the young people are being rushed and forced into, which they don’t feel they will know the answers to for many years that is causing unhappiness. For some young people knowing what they want to do, what they want to “be” is clear, but for others, it is not and it causes many difficulties. Crafter, de Abreu, Cline and O’Dell (2015, p.94) have argued that sociocultural contexts can limit what is perceived to be available and possible, and these constraints influence potential pathways. The sociocultural context of the current educational pathway system can be recognised as one which is placing such constraints on the young people in this study.

As in my study, the young people in Rose and Baird’s study were at a “critical decision point” in their educational career. Rose and Baird (2013, p.170) note the “pragmatic rationalism” that young people have to adapt today in thinking about their future: their choices are confined by the structures they inhabit, their opportunities and their qualifications, and how “subjective perceptions” and “chance events” affect their life courses.

Farthing (2016) conducted a mixed methods study with young people from very deprived economic backgrounds in England aimed to uncover how young people understand the disjuncture between objective and subjective accounts of their lives. It showed that young people felt agentic (able to make choices) but similarly did not believe that personal agency was enough to lift them out of poverty. In focus group discussions in Farthing's study, he notes that the young people 'internalised ambiguity' between what was calculable (knowable) and what was incalculable in their lives. Farthing reports that young people often refused to engage in discussions around the impact of structure in their lives: "the narrative developed time and time again was that it was their choices, their actions and decisions that matter in their lives" (Farthing, 2016, p. 766). The Year 11 students in my study adopt a similar stance and shoulder the burden of their choices and actions. In the second part of Farthing's study, in which young people wrote their own local anti-poverty policy, they demonstrated an awareness of the role of the state in reducing poverty, problematized barriers, and noted structural limitations. Their policies were suggestive of "structurally frustrated political agency" (Farthing, 2016, p. 768). In my study, the Year 11s imply similarly structural frustrations at the "school" (the education and pre-determined career trajectory system) in having to decide now what they want to be and how best to get there. In my study, as in Farthing's, the responsibility of choice for young people is the dominant narrative, but it does not preclude awareness of how structures (state, school, education system) impact their lives.

7.2.1 Choices, competences and projects of the self

As discussed in Chapter 2, eudaimonic perspectives on happiness align with many aspects of Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This posits that humans seek to be *fully adaptive* and *optimally functioning*, arguing that we have basic psychological needs that require fulfilment. Autonomy (experiencing and enjoying choice, volition, and investing ourselves in something), competence (the ability to operate effectively, to achieve mastery

over tasks); and the need for relatedness (to experience true meaningful connections with others) are these needs. I have argued in this chapter that choices for young people are often problematic and can be sources of stress in their lives. Henderson, Holland, McGrellis and Thomson (2007, p. 13) writing about identity formation in youth transitions highlight the importance of feelings of competence. They suggest that feeling you are doing something well –feeling competent- affects how and why young people make choices and move between identities over time. They argue that these feelings of competence are dependent on receiving recognition from others, and that young people engage in projects of the self. Such projects of the self were explicitly identified by Daniel in his individual interview:

Daniel: I wanna- I want to work hard to achieve what I want to do. Like, people could argue that I am already naturally smart, but you'll- it- you're not...I don't want to feel like I was *handed* my grades, I want to...put...hours of work into...dedicate myself to them, because school is the first *eighteen* years of your life...minimum! [Laughs]. So, it's obviously something- an eighteen year project for getting, what is it? Two...maybe more, qualifications

Cordelia: Yeah

Daniel: So obviously this is something to work towards...cos I've got nothing else to do! [Laughs] I'm a kid! [Laughs]

Daniel constructs his childhood to adulthood as an 18 year project, at the end of which he needs to be able to go on to achieve what he wants in the future. It is important to him that he gains recognition from others for working hard to fulfil his childhood project achievements, and that his achievements are not dismissed because he is “naturally smart”.

Jordan is also engaged in a project of the self, in which he is trying to effect competencies that will protect him from not knowing what he wants to do in life:

Cordelia: ...What do you imagine that you're going to be doing in the future, what would you like to do?

Jordan: I think that was one of my many problems, and that was why I decided to do...down to do Maths, Physics and Film Studies at A Level. Because...I don't know what I wanna do after...um, after this year. I have thought about it but there's nothing I can see myself doing after this...like, I know that's- that will be the case for many people- but I can't see myself in a job environment. I already- with my work experience- I did great in my work experience, but I didn't enjoy it that much.

Jordan: But again, I wouldn't know what I would want to do there...at university. Obviously there's a wide selection. But...I think...especially doing A levels, and my GCSEs, in, in five or six years from now, they'll just be numbers and how many A to Cs I got really. Maths, English and Science will be quite important, but other than that it will just be how many A star to Cs I got. And then A levels will show that I've gone into further education and done that...and then having a driver's license as well...will show that I've been, you know, educated even further and accepted a further understanding of...just the world and stuff. And I know a lot more, which shows...higher intelligence, I think, which er, which is always awesome. Um...but yeah, so I'm sort of building layers for myself, and then I'm going to evaluate that with what jobs I can physically do- I'm gonna see what- my mum's helping me write a CV later tonight, cause it's a Friday and I don't have to do any homework or anything- that's what tomorrow's for- erm! [Half laugh]. And I'm gonna drop that off at some places in __, just, so I can see if I can get a part time job on a Saturday, because I think...that'd be...again, that would be another layer that I can show that I've had job experience on there as well as my work experience. Um, because I just really do not know what I wanna do

Jordan's describes these acquisitions of competencies as "building layers for myself", but the importance of these layers is not in the inherent content of what he has studied or learnt, but in what they "show" to others that he is capable of. These excerpts support the contention of Henderson et al., (2007) that competencies need to be recognised by others. Within the eudaimonic concept of the self-determined individual, feelings of competence are ideally intrinsic in nature and not contingent on external sources of validation and approval. However, an important caveat to this is at least acknowledged by Deci & Ryan (1985, p. 29): "However, many non-intrinsically motivated behaviours may be competence-oriented and some may even be characterized by interest. To be truly intrinsically motivated, a person must also feel free from pressures, such as rewards or contingencies. Thus, we suggest,

intrinsic motivation will be operative when action is experienced as autonomous, and it is unlikely to function under conditions where controls or reinforcements are the experienced cause of action.”

In this section, I have endeavoured to make visible the complex, challenging and pressured nature of choices and competencies, and how these relate to young people’s happiness, projects of the self and their imagined futures. Young people are not fully autonomous in their choice making, the structures that those choices inhabit are burdensome, yet they are aware of the pressures to demonstrate their competencies and the responsibility they are expected to shoulder to make the “right” decisions, and choose the “proper” pathways to their futures.

8.3 THE MEANINGS AND IMPORTANCE OF HAPPINESS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

In my study, there were 672 things associated with happiness from the happiness maps. Happiness is not one thing, or even a list of ten things that can be pinpointed and measured in order to understand what happiness means for young people. In the few studies that have investigated children’s definitions and attributed meanings of happiness, there are some overlaps with aspects of happiness that are salient for young people in my study. For example, in Lopez-Perez’s et al.’s (2016) study, relationships with people, both family and friends was one of the most frequently mentioned definitions of happiness, reflecting similar findings to my study as discussed in Chapter 5. In another Spanish study, children (aged 9-10) and young adolescents (aged 13-14) were asked “what is well-being?”, “what facilitates well-being?”, and “what hinders well-being?” (Navarro et al., 2017). In focus group discussions that were distinguished by age and by scores on well-being scales (low subjective well-being versus high subjective well-being), children in Navarro’s study mentioned both

positive and negative aspects of well-being across the groups, and all groups discussed relationships with family and friends as key factors in defining well-being. These also support my findings discussed in Chapter 5.

However, I wanted to explore meanings of happiness for young people further in this study. I put this question to the two discussion groups. In the Year 10 group, most of the young people either found the question too difficult, or did not want to answer, as only Daisy and Ella responded:

Year 10

Cordelia: What does happiness mean to you?

Daisy: I think it's the feeling like, of being content...and like, not expecting more. Like

Unidentified: Dunno

Daisy: Just...it's like a glow, isn't it? Like, you just feel...happy

Cordelia: Yeah

Daisy: Dunno...how to explain it

Cordelia: So, it's contentment and feeling like you don't want anything more out of life at that particular moment?

Daisy: Yeah

Cordelia: Yeah? OK- that's really good, thank you.

Ella: For me, it's just being relaxed like, nothing, like everything's making you kind of happy cause there's nothing behind you going you know...there's nothing for you to be *unhappy* about

Cordelia: Yeah- so there's no fly in the ointment there?

Ella: Yeah

Feelings of contentment, and absence of worries were the key, albeit brief definitions of happiness, echoing some similarities with Navarro et al.'s (2017) study. For the Year 11 group, the question was still challenging, but the responses were fuller and more complex:

Year 11

Cordelia: What does happiness *mean*?

Holly: It doesn't really mean anything. It's just like a *feeling* that you get....in my opinion.

Jordan: It's a joyous state of mind. I mean, it's different for everybody. You can't define what happiness is. Happiness comes under so many different...just definitions, that you can't just stick them to *one* thing. There's many things that make different people happy and, um, there's a lot of things that make people happy that make other people sad. And I don't think you can really *define* something that means...something that...big.

Emily: I think happiness means memories. Like I, you do...people say I do everything to make them happy, but then...the one thing which keeps us happy is the memory of it. So...when you...play a sport, you'll do it because you say it's gonna make you happy, but really the memory of *winning* is gonna make you happy.

Daniel: I think happiness is very, very unique. For some people live the lifestyle of, if I died today, would I be happy with...what I did tomorrow. But, everybody has different things that make them happy, as, was it you [turning to Jordan] who said, like something that can make someone happy can make someone else sad? It's just one...it depends on where you grew up, how you grew up, who taught you, who socialised you when you were younger- your friends- and...I dunno...It's hard, because you...as a person, you probably have a completely different view of what makes you happy than everybody else around you...

Lori: Mmm. I think it's recognising not everything's...not...all bad, and it's not the end, and when it's like, you're happy...it's just, I dunno, just, I think like being *content* with life...like, you're just happy with what you've got...at that time

Cordelia: So lots of different things and different for...individuals?

Many responses confirming: Yeah

The personal and individual nature of the meaning of happiness was privileged in the Year 11 definitions of happiness. These embraced feelings, memories, contentment, and pragmatism.

Importantly, there is a clear recognition that happiness is different for everyone. Jordan and then Daniel argued that the same thing that made one person happy can make another sad. The methodology employed in studies, including the content and framing of questions can influence the content and the ways in which responses are made. Lopez-Perez et al. (2016) point out that unlike previous studies with adults, over 90% of children and adolescents in their study defined happiness only in one way (i.e. their definition of happiness related either to positive feelings, *or* to relationships, *or* to achievement etc.) They argue that more complex definitions of happiness may emerge if asking the question relating to specific aspects or domains. The authors recommend further studies including more questions to explore young people's conceptualisations of happiness, and that research should take into account different cultural backgrounds. My study has shown that young people do define happiness in complex ways, and although definitions were particular to that individual, there was awareness that the meanings of happiness were different for others.

8.3.1 The importance of happiness

Recently, some researchers have begun to question the importance and construction of the modern conceptualisations of happiness. The educational philosopher Peter Roberts, has suggested that this happiness “industry” has become an extension of the neoliberalist ideal of the autonomous, self-interested, agentic self (Roberts, 2015, p. 103). Roberts argues that happiness has been marketed to such a degree that individuals may now be prone to judging whether they are succeeding or failing at attaining happiness. He warns of the dangers of a happiness “performance anxiety”, whereby the expectation and norm to be happy all of the time leaves no room for any “negative” emotions, lest the revealing of other emotional states than happiness leads to inquiry and investigation (Roberts, 2015, p. 105). In Lopez-Perez et al.'s (2016) study of children and adolescent's meanings of happiness, happiness being defined as the “ultimate value in life” (a category drawn from predominantly adult

conceptualisations) was rarely mentioned for any child under 13, although it was mentioned by 15% of children aged 14-16. In my study, young people both accepted and resisted the importance of happiness. For some in the Year 10 discussion group, happiness was important because of its effect on the young people: it enhanced how they felt about themselves and it was motivational:

Katie: You know if you're like it's just the one happy being happy... if something makes you happy just at the start of the day the rest of your day seems to go a little bit *better*, you kind of feel a bit more, feel better within yourself, you feel more confident, and it makes you feel like you can do more than you usually could if you like...were unhappy

Cordelia: Yeah

Daisy : I think happiness is important because if you're not happy you just spend, like, you just, you're not like feel motivated to do stuff, you're not active, kind of just...in your habitat

In considering whether happiness was important in their future, Daisy argued that happiness was *the* point in life, again mentioning how it motivated and encouraged her in life, preventing boredom and providing her with memories when she reached old age. For Chloe, feeling happy facilitated enjoying and enhancing experiences:

Cordelia: When you think about the future, or what you would like to do, how much is being happy important?

Daisy: The biggest part.

Cordelia: Yeah?

Daisy: Yeah. The most important.

Cordelia: Can you say a little bit more about that?

Daisy: Um...I don't really see much point, like...if you're not going to be happy, then what *is* the point? I feel like happiness is one of the things that...just keeps getting like

bigger and bigger, the happier you are, the more like, you're encouraged to do stuff, like, I just feel like happiness is a large part of life.

Cordelia: Yeah

Chloe: You've got to be happy to enjoy something

Daisy: Exactly

Chloe: It's like when you're out with your family and you're not happy, it's like not a very good time, when you're happy, it is a good time.

Daisy: And you don't want your life to be like boring, like when you're old you won't have any memories

Chloe: Exactly

In the Year 11 discussion group, the normalisation of happiness is foregrounded by Jordan. It is recognised as being "a thing" that is for everyone, which he compares to wealth which is for a privileged few. Jordan subsequently considers happiness to be one of many important emotions because of its ability to facilitate feelings and experiences in life. Lori displays an awareness of different "values" in life. She relates the value of happiness to other possible values, with the implication that these may be considered desirable but will not give you anything to live for, unlike happiness. Lori constructs happiness in terms of mental health; she references the famous actor Robin Williams who took his own life following severe depression to back up her point. Like Daisy in Year 10, Emily maintains that happiness is of the ultimate importance, and also relates this importance to memories of one's life in old age. Holly's argument also parallels that of the younger group: happiness is motivational and augments what can be gained from life. Yet happiness as being important in life is also contested by some in the group. For Daniel, happiness is unique albeit ephemeral, and for Gemma and Mia happiness is just one emotion of many that need to be experienced in order to be human and know ourselves:

Jordan: It, it depends, 'cos if it wasn't there, if happiness wasn't a *thing*, I don't think anyone would notice. If everyone would just be like gloomy and sad all the time...if everyone was just gloomy and sad all the time, including me, that would, that would be the *norm*, but because it's...because you see so many happy people around you, it appears it's quite a significant part of your life. Like it's not just something that is for...one person, or...one person, like two persons...yeah. It's not just like being wealthy, where, you know, there's like certain groups...*everyone* has experienced happiness before. It's when...it gets taken away that we notice, and...it becomes far more significant to you than...as it was before.

Lori: I think it is important because...for example, if you look at people like Robin Williams, like he had everything that...most people would value, probably over happiness, but because of his mental disorder like, the lack of happiness...did...like, impact his life, and like, change obviously the direction his life went in. I think if you don't have happiness then...You don't really have anything to live for anymore. Like...there's nothing that's gonna fulfil you in life, if you don't have happiness.

Emily: Yeah, I agree. I think happiness is, like, the *most* important thing because if you didn't have it...then what really is your life? Like, you can't just sit there and have nothing to live for, because happiness is what you look back on.

Jordan: It's very self-fulfilling...happiness...a state of happiness is like something personal to *you*...and person [indecipherable] usually friends with...so, I'd say, yeah it is- happiness is *very* important. It makes you experience things that...is different. It makes you have different experiences to what you would think. Like I, if you, if you were happy *all* the time, then, erm, everything would be boring. If you were sad all the time, everything would be boring...because it would all be the same. But because you get, like a *range* of emotions, um, you *need* them all. I think happiness is as significant and as important as the rest of the emotions you can feel...because....It's, it's something different...that you can feel, that makes things more...enjoyable.

Holly: Happiness is *kind of* important, like er...that was the question right? [Laughter]. I got muddled up in my mind- I was trying to think of something and then I thought it was kind of oh...It's important because if you're happy, you take interest in stuff. But if you're not happy, you don't take interest in stuff, to me it's important because then you can do the stuff that you *like*, you can take interest in them. Whereas if you're not happy, then it's *not* important because then you don't take interest in anything, you don't wanna do anything...you just wanna...lie down [Half laugh]

Daniel: Happiness can surprise you. You can just be...um...[loses train of thought amidst some laughter]... You can think of a random thing, and it will just, kind of brighten your mood, you're kind of just like...in limbo... You know...Not in-between... You're in-between happiness and sad...anything could pull you over either side...so the slightest thing can make you sad, or the slightest thing can make you happy...it depends on who you are...so...the *uniqueness* of that makes it more important to people

Gemma: I think if you...like only had happiness, it would be quite boring, cos then you wouldn't be able to *feel* any other like...*feeling*...and then you would...it just wouldn't be as *happy* anymore. So, like you had to experience some *other* type of emotions...to be happy

Mia: I don't think happiness is *that* important because...all of the other emotions are just...what make us human...and is your happiness is...It's one of the things that does make us feel *good* about ourselves, but all the *other* ones help us realise who we really are...and like, how we deal with certain situations, so it's basically helping us find *ourselves*, and if we were just happy all the time, we wouldn't *truly* know how we were.

Joshanloo and Weijers (2014, p. 718) argue that “Western culture and psychology seem to take for granted that happiness is one of the most important values guiding individuals’ lives, if not the most important. Western culture and psychology also seem to take for granted that happiness is best understood as a personal concept”, echoing the argument of Roberts (2015) above. In my study, the personal and individual nature of happiness is inherent in the ways in which its importance is constructed, whether the argument is for or against the importance of happiness. However, it is not accepted by the young people as being important for its own sake. Happiness has clear functions in their lives: sometimes facilitating and being compared with other emotions and feelings, and sometimes motivating and enhancing life experiences.

There are also aversions to happiness that are justified by some from all cultures, maintain Joshanloo & Weijers (2014). The authors state that In Western cultures, particularly North America, it is perceived as the norm that we want, value and accept some responsibility for attaining happiness; this is particularly emphasised in individualistic rather than collectivistic cultures; where the latter prioritise belonging and social harmony over individual happiness. This supports the argument of Diener (1984, p. 551) who maintained that the term “happy” was ambiguous cross-culturally, and that happiness can be normative in some cultures and groups. As illustrated above, Jordan compares an imagined alternative normality of “sadness” to the implied existing normality of happiness for everyone. Other universal facets of aversion to happiness include the belief that happiness will most probably lead to, or be followed by unhappiness, as well as a fear of happiness. There are hints of fear of happiness this in way young people in my study are talking about happiness being contentment, of nothing bad happening at that moment to ruin things, almost implying a staving off of unhappiness. In considering how and whether happiness was important to the young people in my study, I became aware that there was an expectation from others that they *should* be happy. Happiness has been prioritised by others *for* young people to such an extent that at times they are pretending to be happy.

8.4 PRETENDING TO BE HAPPY

Emerging from both discussion groups was a clear theme that young people feel under some pressure to be happy. At times, the expectation for them to be happy results in them pretending to be happy in order to please others. This echoes the *performing* self (Goffman, 1959), where individuals engage in dramatic socialized performances to different audiences. The Year 11 discussion group identified groups of others to whom they were different

people, including themselves, supporting the notion of giving individualised performances, as shown in the following excerpt:

Isabelle: I feel like every has like two different personalities like...for your family and friends including people...if you don't have any friends you're just stuck with them

Daniel: Yup

Holly: I think I have like three

[Some laughing from others]

Holly: Erm, I'm a person to myself, I'm a person to my friends and a person to my family

Emily: Yeah, but then you get like persons...like teachers as well [half laugh]

Young people are sometimes performing being happy to their different social groups. Feeling under pressure to be happy often comes from parents, but was also felt from friends and romantic relationships. Norah described how she felt that she had to be in a good mood for her school friends, even when she didn't want to be:

Um like, if friends are happy but maybe like I'm in a bit of a...mood where I don't wanna be happy then I think like I've got to be in the mood...for like me and my friends to be happy, not just to be one of those persons that are gonna be like 'No I don't agree with that, or I don't agree with that', I think that I need to be ... a per...someone that's gonna be in a good mood at school, but like...not take it out on other friends.

Similar feelings of not being allowed to be unhappy were discussed by others in the Year 10 discussion group. These were particularly strong in relation to parents' expectations that their children should be happy, which was directly voiced, or agreed with by most of the Year 10 discussion group. This discussion arose from my question, "How important is happiness?" and was answered by the group in terms of others' expectations of young people's happiness, particularly parents:

Megan: Like if I'm not happy and they expect me to be happy I feel like I'm supposed, I'm like *forced* to be happy and I feel like I'm making other people worried, making them unhappy...

Cordelia: Yeah

Megan: ...So it's gonna affect *their* day...everything [indecipherable] them

Sometimes young people believe that their parents are thinking the worst about any unhappiness they detect in their children, and pressure them to disclose the *reason* for being unhappy, which increases the emotional discomfort of their children. Rachel articulated the “stereotyping” accorded to young people of her age:

I think like, especially with like kids our age you get like...it's almost like stereotyped, like if we're not happy, we're like sat in a room self-harming or something...they can't just accept the fact that we're just not happy

Continually feeling under pressure to be happy results in young people pretending to be happy in order to assuage concerns of others, or to be left alone. Goffman (1959, p. 63) describes a requisite “expressive coherence” for performances, whereby how we are as “human selves” can be divergent from the display of our “socialized selves”. For the benefit of our audience, our own tumultuous inner states need to be managed so that our performance appears harmonious with our outwardly expressive appearance. Hochschild (1983) developed the theory of *emotional labor*, describing it as, “This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others...This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). Hochschild was interested in the “exchange value” of emotional labor within the workplace, but describes the same efforts of mind and feeling management in order “to create a publicly observable face and bodily display” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7) that are found in a private context, synonymously termed “emotion work” or “emotion management”. The “exchange value” of emotion labor in the workplace instead has a “use value” within a private context. In my study, Norah recounted her own efforts to reconcile an

outward expression with a desired character performance of being happy. She rearranged her facial expression to support the pretence of happiness, when facing continued questioning from her mother:

My mum panics if I'm like, if I'm not happy then my mum will like ask why and I'm like 'I'm fine, can you just like leave me alone?' and she'll just carry on going, I'm just like 'I'm fine' and then I'll just like put a serious face on and make sure I look like I'm happy even if I'm like...not...I just don't want to tell her

Goffman would interpret such actions as a character performance: Norah desires that her audience (her mother) sees a socialized performance from Norah, with her outward expression in harmony with her performance of being happy. Hochschild would interpret Norah's actions as managing her own unhappier emotions, in order to have the desired display (a happy outward appearance). Both Goffman and Hochschild allow for an inner state that is different from the outer displayed state; however Hochschild recognises the cost to the self of such emotion work.

Similar emotional work in altering facial expressions to pretend to have another emotion can also be found in pretending *not* to be happy, as disclosed by Megan:

...like what, if I'm, if I'm happy I won't show it that often cause in my family there's a lot of things going on...and if I show that I'm happy, I'm scared that they're gonna be like 'Why are you happy- it's a sad time and all that?' So, I always...sit...around...like with a straight face. And then my boyfriend's goes 'Wassamatter?' And he'll *ask* until I tell him, and then...I just get annoyed and then my happiness does go

In Goffman's terms, they are engaged in "misrepresentation" to their audience (Goffman, 1959); which in this case are a form of "white lies...mean to protect others, rather than defend themselves" (Goffman, 1959, p. 69). They are often hiding their own feelings, or actively pretending to have other feelings and emotions because they are aware of others' reactions and worries, and wish to minimise causing distress to others. In the excerpts above,

the young people are in fact revealing an acute emotional sensitivity to those around them, by wanting to protect their audience from having to see the person behind the character portrayed. According to Goffman (1959, pp. 78-79), we learn through “anticipatory socialization”: a sub-conscious familiarity of our audiences’ routines, trialling out our performances and roles to those closest to us when we are young.

Hochschild (1983, p. 33) distinguishes between “surface acting”: deceiving others about what we feel, but not deceiving ourselves; and “deep acting”, which can involve deceiving ourselves as well as others. “Deep acting” can muddle the “signal” that our feelings are telling us a “truth” about ourselves. Using this distinction, Megan is engaging in “surface acting” in sitting around with a straight face, trying to deceive her family that she is not happy, that the emotions she has on display are appropriate to the social emotional requirements (empathy) of the current situation. It is ironic that through acting this way for the benefit of her family, the continued pestering of her boyfriend actually changes the way that she does feel, from happiness into annoyance. It illustrates the difficulty of acting to different audiences simultaneously (Megan’s family as one audience, and her boyfriend as the other audience), and the ultimate cost to oneself.

However, the young people in Year 11 discussed the importance of being able to experience a range of emotions, including the value of unhappiness as well as happiness. Sometimes this extends to pursuing activities that will enhance the emotion that they want to feel:

Emily: I don’t think many people have like a perfect life, so I think throughout...like, at least once a week you *have* to be unhappy...to be happy again

Isabelle: It’s the whole thing like it’s OK to be sad

Holly: It’s satisfying if you’re unhappy...kind of. When you’re unhappy and you make yourself more unhappy, you feel closer to being happy...by just getting all your negative feelings out.

Daniel: The more often you’re unhappy, the more you appreciate being happy...unless you, as you said...just wanna be more unhappy

It is possible that the Year 11 young people interviewed felt more secure in their emotional identity than the younger children. Isabelle and Lori initiated a discussion on the importance of being able to be happy when you are alone, and not rely on others:

Isabelle: Maybe like being a moment, like having your own time as well cos, like, some people prefer to be by themselves than like...with a group of family and friends...it's like a typical thing...

Lori: It's like, if you can't be happy by yourself, then, other things that make you happy are like, artificial, cos if you can't make yourself happy, then...

This was taken further by Emily, who sees knowledge of one's individual identity as integral to personal happiness:

Emily: I think all of the things on there [the subjects discussed from the happiness maps] create someone's identity, like, people are happy when they think of themselves as an individual. I don't really think that many people like to be associated with...like loads of different people- they like to have their own *identity*, and I think that's what makes people happy

It may be that the Year 10 students did not feel as confident in themselves to be able to express the actual emotions that they feel. However, pretending to be happy is still experienced by older children, as revealed by Gemma [Year 11]:

Gemma: Yeah, when you're like hiding your feelings from everyone...you'll like *pretend* you're happy but then you're sad inside and...

Daniel: Yeah

Gemma: Like no-one notices...that you're sad when you... [Doesn't finish]

Gemma hints at covering up her feelings, but wanting others to realise that she is really unhappy. Jordan [Year 11] discusses the complex nature of his experiences of pretending to be happy:

I think as well... You need to think that happiness affects people around you as well. If you're happy, you're gonna make other people happy around you... like, if, if you're miserable all the time, people are gonna be, you know, sympathetic... be like come over and be "Oh, what's wrong?" But, if, if you're happy, then everyone else is gonna *join in* the happiness which is why... I think... a lot of people fake being happy. I don't particularly like it -I've done it before -I don't particularly like it because it... it tricks me even... and I don't like being tricked... not that much... and... when people fake being happy, they do it for real, they literally *pretend* to be happy to make people happy around them. I think it's a very *nice* thing to do... yeah, it means I don't have to deal with asking them why they're sad... but I'd rather... people just *told* me that they weren't happy and... it would make me happy to know... to *know* that other people are sad if that makes sense, cos it means that I can *do* something about it more than if they're just *pretending* to be happy which...

For Jordan, like the young people in Year 10, pretending to be happy in order to make others happy is done because he feels responsible for other's happiness, and has learned that by pretending to be happy, he can make others around him happy. However, Jordan is aware that pretending to be happy comes at a personal cost to himself. He describes this using language of deceit: *faking*, *being tricked*, *don't like it*, and wishes that he could give real happiness to others if they showed their genuine emotions, and he could then achieve a genuine happiness himself by helping them. Jordan is attempting Hochschild's "deep acting": putting considerable effort into being happy, at times almost succeeding: "it tricks me even", he describes the process of "doing it for real". Jordan has a strong commitment to making himself and others happy by this deep acting, but it makes him feel conflicted. Although it is "a very nice thing to do", ultimately even deep acting happy is unsatisfying: the feeling "signal" (performing happiness for real) does not represent the 'truth' of the emotions experienced.

8.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explored some of the thoughts and feelings that young people have about their lives. It has also tried to illuminate what it is like to live their lives and the things that affect their conceptualisations of the present and the future. It has criticised the impact of the dominant post-16 education and career pathways in England, with the pressure for young people to make choices *now* and in the *right way* about their future lives. In the second half of this chapter, young people have revealed that happiness is very difficult to define, and that it is individual and different for everyone. Whilst young people do feel that happiness is important, this is not as a universal single minded pursuit of happiness per se: it is functional, facilitating and experiential, but also needs to be considered as being only part of what makes people human. Young people's awareness and sensitivities to those around them have also resulted in pretending to be happy for others' benefit, even though this can result in their own conflicted and uncomfortable feelings. The young people in this study have articulated happiness in ways that are meaningful to them, and have illuminated the negotiations they are making and remaking for the place of happiness in their lives.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I revisit the research questions of my study outlined in Chapter 4. In Section 9.2, I summarise how this thesis has answered the research questions. In considering Research Question 1 particularly, I consider my findings in light of the existing theories of happiness and subjective well-being outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Section 9.3 critically evaluates some strengths and limitations of my study. In Section 9.4, I discuss areas that have emerged from my study that I would like to develop further, and how this thesis has contributed to the wider literature on young people's happiness.

9.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What meanings are attached to happiness for young people? How do young people conceptualise happiness?

This study revealed that what counts as happiness for young people in this study is individually variable. The happiness maps (see Chapter 4) contained a total of 672 things that the young people associated with their happiness. Of these, 260 items from the happiness maps were only mentioned by one person; a further 37 by two more. Even using this simple level of analysis shows that what counts as happiness is also more wide-ranging than most existing happiness conceptualisations allow for. In contrast to the findings of Lopez-Perez, Sanchez and Gummerum's (2016) Spanish study on children and adolescent's definitions of happiness, where young people rarely defined happiness as being more than one thing, the young people in my study thought that there were many different individual associations and meanings attached to happiness, and that something that made someone happy could make

someone else sad. This was commented on particularly by the young people in the Year 11 discussion group.

The most frequently mentioned things that were important to young people's happiness were family and family members, friends, music, food, sport and pets. In the discussion groups, sleeping and rest, and time to oneself were mentioned as being important, which had also frequently appeared on the maps. Research on young people's happiness from their own perspectives is still rare, as discussed in Chapter 3. The most frequently mentioned items from the happiness maps share similarities with the findings of these few studies, including people that were loved, food and drink, animals and pets, and sleep (Nic Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2006). A second small Irish study of 12-13 year olds on interpretations of the words "happy" and "healthy" found that happiness for these young people was associated with doing things and being with people, and strong relationships with family and friends were integral to their happiness (O'Higgins et al., 2010). Chaplin's (2009) investigation into what makes children and adolescents happy revealed five themes: people and pets, achievements, material things, hobbies and sports. There are some clear commonalities of findings across these studies on what is frequently mentioned by children and young people as being important to their happiness.

Asking the question of "what" makes people happy is rare in happiness research, which has instead primarily addressed "how" happy people are (Chaplin, 2009). Chaplin argues that research on "what makes people happy" is needed in order to contribute to richer understandings of happiness. I would also argue that the need for this research extends to recognising the individual, contingent, temporal, and contextual nature of happiness. "How happy are you" questions, whether they are for global assessments of happiness, or subjective well-being, or domain-specific assessments, assume that happiness is the same for everyone,

and can be reliably measured as such. Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis have discussed the problems of conceptualising and measuring happiness in this way.

Chaplin (2009) used her “happiness collage” as a measure of happiness, concentrating on the number of items in each analysed theme. However, through recording some qualitative data alongside these frequency counts, she highlighted the need to contextualise quantitative findings in happiness research. In her study of young people’s understandings of “feeling well” and “feeling good”, Spencer (2013, p. 121) argued that feelings of self-belief were closely bound to contexts that allowed for individual empowerment, and that meanings are shaped by the contexts of young people’s lives. The failure to locate (psychological) research with children and young people within social and cultural contexts has been a major criticism from childhood studies researchers (see for example, Prout and James, 2015). My thesis has endeavoured to contextualise the things that were important to the young people’s happiness through the open-ended reflection sections on the happiness questionnaires, and through employing discussion groups and individual interviews.

Engaging with these methods in order to enrich understanding and contextualise what counts as happiness for the young people in my study has revealed some new insights into *why* and *how* things are important for happiness. In Chapter 5, the relationships that young people had with members of their families and their friends were important to their happiness, but happiness with these relationships was qualified and contingent. Feelings of love, attachment and family bonds are important, and shared interests and activities with family members can facilitate these close relationships. The importance of feeling supported by family was emphasised. However, although there was often love for their family, this was often qualified by feeling that their family could also make them sad and (or) angry. Young people see that their relationships with their family change as they grow up, and they talked about this in relation to their happiness. The older children (Year 11) directly compared attitudes and

“positivity” towards them of parents and friends. Some of them saw parents as being more negative, less supportive, and holding on to long-standing views and expectations of their child from an earlier age. Close and frequent times were spent with both family and friends, but friends were regarded as generally more accepting and positive than parents. The older children in Year 11 were beginning to forge their own versions of family, choosing who they want to be close to, rather than just thinking of family as their blood (or step) relatives. These young people were also more confident in their knowledge of friendships, and what it was about them that contributed to their happiness. Within this knowledge is an awareness of unspoken rules and allegiances. There were more problems, and more indications of difficulties, with friends with the Year 10 girls, where friends seemed less accepting and encouraging of each other than in the case of the older children. These insights into the nature of these relationships show that their contribution and importance to young people’s happiness is very complex, and needs to be understood within the context of their lives.

Similarly, the exploration of the role of music in Chapter 6, and of choice in Chapter 8, revealed both multi-faceted contributions and impediments to young people’s happiness. The young people in my study were very aware of their physical and mental well-being, and their experiences of happiness were discussed often within these frames. They considered how activities, experiences and rest were important. As an example, engaging with music could provide comfort, facilitate the experience of emotions (positive and negative), release stress, motivate, alleviate boredom, provide a means of bonding with others but also cause embarrassment in sharing their music choices. Importantly, music could be also be enjoyed just for its own sake and did not have to be associated with any higher purpose in order to contribute to their happiness. Choice was associated with more independence and autonomy, and was positive for young people in Year 10. However, for the young people in the Year 11 discussion group, being able to choose friends was positive, but otherwise choice was

problematized, inherently stressful and intimately bound up with pressure to make the *right* choices about their education and future whilst not feeling equipped to do so.

In contextualising some of the most frequently mentioned contributors to young people's happiness, I have shown that all of these things can also contribute to their unhappiness.

Language of unhappiness was included in discussion and reflection across the data. This further illustrates that happiness is complex and contingent on many things. In developing a subjective well-being model for children, Ravens-Sieberer et al., (2014) chose to omit children's discussions of negative affect (emotional experiences), wanting to solely focus on positive aspects. I would argue that if discourses of unhappiness are part of children's and young people's discourse on happiness, then happiness research and theoretical models should reflect this. In other research areas such as that on self-concept and on understandings of health, young people's perspectives have been omitted from much research to date, as noted by recent research in these areas by Tatlow-Golden and Guerin (2017) and Spencer (2013) respectively. These researchers have raised criticisms that adult frameworks and measures dominate research of young people's self-concept and health knowledge, and exclude young people's understandings. Their research has revealed that young people's perspectives are indeed different from adults' perspectives. Backman (2016) has similarly criticised much of research on young people's well-being: that it has been primarily based on (adult) pre-determined constructs which do not allow for the perspectives of young people themselves. I have aimed to illuminate young people's perspectives on their happiness, as well as engaging in "methodological diversification" (away from reliance on positivistic, logico-deductive approaches) to do so, called for by Woodhead and Faulkner (2008) amongst others.

RELATING MY FINDINGS TO EXISTING MODELS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

In considering my findings in light of the models of Subjective Well-being (SWB) discussed in Chapter 2, global assessments of happiness with life (part of the cognitive component of models such as those proposed by Diener (1984)) were not prominent in young people's writing or discussion on happiness. Happiness with different domains of life (for example relationships with others) was important. However, existing measures of happiness with domains of life for children and young people, such as the Good Childhood Index (Rees et al., 2010) used in the annual *Good Childhood Reports*, fail to capture the complexities of these relationships. Measures such as those asking how happy young people are with their relationship with their family also do not allow for an assessment of individual relationships within the family context. My study has shown that young people understand these individual relationships as both unique and part of a wider network of family and other social relationships. Diener argued that people's emotional experiences represented the everyday discourse of happiness, and further conceptualised subjective well-being in terms of having more positive than negative affect. However, emotions in general are neglected in happiness research, with its focus on eudaimonic conceptions of happiness, despite recognition that they should be included (The Children's Society, 2016a). I have shown that emotions are important in *how* things are associated with and are important to young people's happiness. Emotions need to be included in happiness research, however, the role and function of emotions needs to be contextualised and not considered as an isolated variable.

In consideration of Ryff's (1989) dimensions of psychological well-being model, the young people in my study spoke about self-knowledge, if at all, rather than "self-acceptance" as part of their well-being. Rather than prioritising Ryff's "positive attitudes" about themselves as

important to their happiness, it was how experiences contributed to their physical and mental well-being and happiness, and how experiences were also just of interest and enjoyed that informed young people's talk. "Positive relations with others" were important, but these relationships were complex and contingent, and could also cause unhappiness. Ryff includes the dimension of "autonomy and choice" in her model; my study has revealed that the notion of "choice" can be problematic for young people within the context of their educational and career choices that they have to make. Being able to do things – and in some cases, specifically being able to do them well – was important to some of the young people in my study, which aligns most closely with Ryff's dimension of "environmental mastery". Having a "sense of purpose in life" and this dimension of Ryff's model, alongside that of "personal growth, reaching one's potential" reflect particularly eudaimonic perspectives on well-being. For some young people, like Daniel and Jordan, there were reflections on the idea of "self as project"; others also expressed wanting to do well in exams, or excelling in sports. However, for most of the young people, any notion of "personal growth" was primarily bound up with negotiating school and higher education systems and designated pathways, and of making the "right choices", which are difficult as they often did not know what they wanted to do in the future at the age of 15 or 16. Ryff herself notes that well-being research should investigate life experiences and opportunities, although little has been done in this respect in happiness research to date. This thesis has gone some way to address this deficit.

Lastly in this section, I want to consider the dichotomising, and valuing of eudaimonic (personal growth and development, and agentic choice) over hedonic (comfort and pleasure seeking) happiness that dominates much of the recent literature of what happiness *should* be, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Diener (1984) maintains that SWB is subjective, includes a predominance of positive over negative affect, includes a global assessment of life, and also

of domains of life, yet acknowledges that assessment of these are culturally dependent. Thin (2016) argues that subjective well-being measures can give interesting information but happiness itself is inherently changeable and debatable. Delle Fave et al. (2011) also say that psychologically, eudaimonia is culturally determined, so that across different models of well-being, there are acknowledgements that all aspects may in fact be culturally determined. However, the nature of these cultural influences is not often discussed in subjective well-being research. Thin (2016) argues that people need a balance of things that are valuable to them and things that are enjoyable, not an either/or of hedonism/eudaimonism. I agree with this point, and would extend it - based on the findings of my study - to say that things that are important to young people's happiness can be both "valuable" and "enjoyable" at the same time, or one or the other at another time.

RQ2: How important is happiness for young people?

The importance of happiness is relative: for some young people in my study, at some points, happiness was seen as the ultimate goal, or "point" of life, but for others, happiness was ephemeral and of less importance. Lopez-Perez et al. (2016) also found that conceptualisations of happiness as the ultimate value in life were rarely made by children and adolescents aged 9-16, with the small number of mentions mostly by those aged 14-16 in their study with Spanish children. In my study, happiness was important for some young people because it was described as being motivational, and enabled them to enjoy life and be fulfilling in itself. Happiness was difficult to define, particularly for those in the Year 10 discussion group: it was described as a feeling of contentment, a glow, there being nothing to make you unhappy, but others in the group said that they did not know what it meant. For the Year 11 discussion groups, definitions were more complex. Happiness could be a feeling, a

joyous state of mind, memories, recognition that bad times were not the end, it was mostly individual and again, impossible to define- it was rarely discussed in dispositional terms- although some of the older children acknowledged depression and mental illness. For the young people in Year 11, the importance of happiness was also resisted: it was not required to be permanent, because of the need to experience other things too, although there was a recognition that being happy is supposed to be normal, a “thing”. For these young people, all emotions are important (especially for the older children); they are part of what make you human. Being unhappy sometimes is part of a wider conceptualisation of happiness. It allows you to experience a spectrum of emotion and feeling, to know when you are happy because it is different from other emotions. Huta (2012) maintains that both positive and negative emotions are important for well-being, and this was something that was recognised by the older children in my study.

However, the importance of happiness to all of the young people in my study can also be considered in how they felt their happiness was important to others. In both of the discussion groups, it was voiced that there were expectations that they should be happy (primarily from their parents, but sometimes also from friends), and these expectations amount to feeling under pressure to be happy. This resulted in young people pretending to be happy (or even unhappy as revealed by one young person) in order to please or assuage the concerns of others. In this way, pretending to be happy can be thought of as their attempts to manage their human and social selves (Goffman, 1959), but also as efforts that involve considerable *emotional labour*, for example re-arranging their facial expressions to mask their own feelings (Hochschild, 1983) with these efforts at some discomfort and distress to themselves. Young people’s emotional sensitivity to those people important to them are revealed here, but this should also be considered in light of the cultural norms of the desirability of happiness in the UK, and the resulting “performance anxiety” surrounding the necessity of happiness

(Roberts, 2015). If there is no space where children and young people may be free to express or show anything other than happiness as an acceptable emotion, state or trait at all times, this has implications for their well-being in the present and for their future.

RQ3: How do young people understand how their happiness changes over time? In what way is happiness part of young people's past, present and expectations of the future?

Chapters 7 and 8 explored young people's feelings and subjectivities: what their lives were like, and if and how happiness was part of it. This study has revealed that for these young people, happiness was perceived as something that changes over time. Childhood happiness was conceptualised as being simple and instantly achievable compared with their present happiness: childhood happiness related to playing, activities and gratification of straightforward wants. Memories of family holidays were an important part of the experiences of childhood happiness recounted in the four individual interviews. These experiences of the "carefree" happiness of childhood were compared with the increasing complexities of growing up, taking on more responsibilities and commitments, working hard, including earning happiness; as they were changing, leaving behind their "old self" of childhood, the nature of happiness was changing alongside. For the young people in Year 11, thoughts of stress that related to the present and of their future choices and selves was more prominent than thoughts of future happiness. As discussed above, changing relationships as the young people were growing up also influenced their happiness.

The narrative analysis section of Chapter 7 allowed me to explore young people's understanding of happiness experiences through the course of their lives. Each of the four narratives included are individual; none of the young people experienced happiness in the same way, accounted for or viewed happiness in the same way. Stephens and Breheny (2013)

suggest that people use stories to explain their experiences. The young people's experiences of happiness can be understood within their negotiation of the individual and social identities available to them and cannot be separated from the context of their lives. Understanding of meanings needs to be contextualised (Spencer, 2013), and I would agree that the meanings of happiness for young people are also dependent on what has happened in their lives previously, what is happening now and their visions of the future.

This point also relates to the ontological nature of happiness, which I argue is fundamentally individual, constantly changing, both in its form (feeling, mood, emotion, experiential state) and in its importance to young people. It is part of young people's lives in how it is contributes to their experiences and their identity. Erikson's (1963, 1980) influential theory maintains that adolescence is the transitioning period into adulthood, a resolution of the ego crisis of identity vs. role confusion. This is a period where all previous childhood identities coalesce into a new "emerging adulthood" identity. This theory has been re-visited by Arnett (2004), who argues that "emerging adulthood" now occurs later, in very late teens and early twenties. Changes in Western societies in the last sixty years have kept children in education and within the family home until much later than in the middle of the twentieth century, when Erikson began his writings. Arnett's "emerging adulthood" is a period that is freer of parental control than adolescence and one which is also a period of independent exploration. The adolescents in Year 11 in my study do not talk of freedom in choosing their future roles; they are instead constricted and challenged by current educational and vocational structures and expectations. Researchers have argued that establishing identity in adolescence (alongside forming connections with others) is an essential step towards self-knowledge and finding meaning in life (Steger, Beeby, Garrett, & Kashdan, 2013). In terms of their future identity, it was difficult for the young people in my study to see a way through choices that had to be

made at this “critical decision point” in their education (Rose & Baird, 2013), and this was affecting their happiness.

9.3 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MY STUDY

My study has acted upon the recommendation from the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (2012) to incorporate children’s voices into happiness and subjective well-being research. Using qualitative methods to provide insight and understanding of young people’s happiness has been important. This is partly to address methodological deficits in this area of research that have been highlighted (e.g. Matthews, Kilgour, Christian, Mori, & Hill, 2015), and to engage in methodological diversification from logico-deductive approaches to research with children (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Using qualitative methods has also been important in revealing the contextual and contingent nature of (young people’s) happiness, and in doing so, positions this research as one that integrates social and psychological perspectives (Prout & James, 2015). It has shown that research on happiness does not have to be restricted to the model-driven quantitative measurements that currently dominate happiness research. I have addressed some of the criticisms from childhood studies that psychology needs to embrace more qualitative methods in research with children, and that researchers need to become more reflexive.

The happiness questionnaires, including the happiness maps, that I developed for this study worked very well. The young people enjoyed completing them and found them straightforward to use. Having a space to write about everything they associated with their happiness before thinking about the relative importance of these things (the happiness maps) was useful as it provided an opportunity to gather their thoughts. The section on reflecting on their happiness maps was particularly illuminating for me as a researcher: it was from this

section that I began to see that happiness was not straightforward; for example, that there were things that made young people both happy and unhappy. I was able to follow up on these in the focus groups and interviews, in order to clarify questions and deepen my understanding of what happiness meant for them.

I have discussed in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) how I had to omit a question on perceptions of relative wealth and possessions compared to friends after the first tranche of data collection with the happiness questionnaires, and that I learned about the need to consider more carefully questions of a similar nature in future. In Chapter 4, I also reflected on the discussion groups and the individual interviews. The school's insistence that these should take place in a room within sight and earshot of a teacher, some of them even occurring in the staff room, could have reinforced power relations that exist within the school, and augmented power differences between myself as the researcher and the young people (Fraser et al., 2014). Additionally, having teachers present in the room could have inhibited how young people discussed happiness. Ideally, research with children and young people would be conducted in familiar places where they feel relaxed and comfortable, but it was not possible in this study.

The atmosphere amongst the two groups of young people was different, with more tensions and difficulties in the younger (Year 10) group. This could have been for a combination of reasons including the research environment, motivations for participation, and interpersonal friction in existing relationships. There were only girls in the Year 10 group, which could also have influenced the dynamics. The Year 11 Group in comparison contained two boys. This group seemed generally more at ease and confident with each other, sharing jokes, listening and responding to each other. I have commented in Chapter 5 how boys did not tend to engage in the reflection section of the happiness maps as much as girls, and that there were more girls than boys who participated in the study overall. In their study on adolescents'

understanding of their active and social selves, Tatlow-Golden and Guerin (2017) found that girls found talking more meaningful than boys as part of their social self-concept; this is also something to consider in future studies on young people's happiness.

I had originally hoped to include more of a longitudinal understanding of young people's happiness, wanting to investigate further findings from the *Good Childhood Report* (The Children's Society, 2012) that children's subjective well-being, or happiness is relatively stable, but changes every three months or so. However, with hindsight I realised that it was not possible to track individual participants' meanings of happiness in this way in my study. The use of pseudonyms, participant anonymization, and the school's time-limits of data collection meant that this was not possible. Future research on young people's happiness may illuminate further changes in individual meanings of happiness over time, and what influences these. Nonetheless, it is a strength of this thesis that it has shown that happiness is individual and that meanings and understandings of happiness are embedded in young people's negotiations of their social and cultural experiences.

Some recent popular discourses have evoked the notion of childhood as being in crisis, with consumerism dominating family life and experiences of childhood (Palmer, 2006); children playing less, having lower well-being and being subject to stresses of academic testing (Kehily, 2010, p. 18). Excessive materialism adversely distinguished the well-being of the UK's children compared with their counterparts in Spain and Sweden (Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute & Nairn, 2011). Materialism has been associated with low self-esteem in children and adolescents (Chaplin & John, 2007), and using material goods and valuing financial success to achieve happiness is associated with lower well-being (Kasser et al., 2014). In my study, I have not found much evidence of materialistic values nor the social, intellectual and emotionally stunted child represented as epitomising the result of a toxic childhood (Palmer, 2006). There were some materialistic objects amongst the 672 items

included in the happiness maps, for example a mobile phone, a brand of trainers, a pair of “skinny jeans” and sometimes money, but these were a minority of the items included on the happiness maps. In the discussion groups and in the individual interviews, materialistic values were not evident in the ways that young people spoke about happiness. Young people spoke of their relationships, the things they enjoyed doing, their future hopes and choices often in ways that reflected an awareness of their own mental and physical well-being and that of others. In the ways that the young people in my study expressed their experiences of happiness, the notion of their inhabiting a toxic childhood was not supported.

9.4 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has opened up new ideas and questions about happiness. There are elements of my research that I would also like to develop in the future.

Chapter 7 explored the qualities and function of music for young people’s happiness.

Following up on the different roles that music plays (for example facilitating emotional release, feeling as though music understands them, being motivational) is a promising avenue of research. The role of music and of sport, another frequently mentioned aspect of happiness from the happiness maps, may be particularly appealing to boys’ interests. I have discussed how boys did not tend to reflect on relationships as much as girls, echoing the findings of Tatlow-Golden and Guerin (2017). The importance of food to young people’s happiness is another area that would be very interesting, particularly in light of political attention on eating behaviours, health and well-being.

It would be beneficial to conduct similar research with different cohorts of young people.

This thesis has discussed the individual nature of happiness, but also explored aspects of happiness that were frequently mentioned by the young people in my study. Comparing

findings with different groups of young people will build on these findings and will work towards generating a new theory of young people's happiness that will be centred on children's own perspectives. Finding ways to include more boys in this research will be important.

More research is needed to understand differences in happiness noted between the young people in Years 10 (ages 14-15) and those in Year 11 (ages 15-16). Within the small cohort of this study, the differences between these two years encompassed the nature of relationships with family members and friends, how "choice" moves from being perceived as positive to stress-related, which is embedded within the educational system, and in more complex and abstract thinking about the nature of happiness itself. Future research investigating the extent to which these age differences exist in further studies of young people's perceptions of happiness, and asking why they change between these two years would further enrich understanding, and contribute to a new theory of young people's happiness. Alongside this, research could encompass personalities or "dispositional traits". This has been something which has been associated (to varying degrees) with variations in subjective well-being/happiness (e.g. Diener, 1984; Proctor et al., 2009), but which was rarely mentioned by the young people in my study.

This thesis presents several new and important findings, contributing to theoretical knowledge on young people's happiness and has strong potential to inform and contribute to knowledge and practice of working with young people. It highlights several crucial problems for young people: feeling under pressure to be happy, and how important being able to express and talk about negative as well as positive emotions is for their emotional wellbeing and mental health. The happiness maps that I have devised can be used in happiness research to take into consideration people's life experiences and facilitate the incorporation of children's voices on their well-being. Sensitive qualitative approaches to understanding

children's wellbeing aligns with the perspective that wellbeing is subjectively experienced, relational and embedded within the context of people's lives (Watson, Emery, & Bayliss, 2012). The happiness maps can be used researchers, practitioners and others concerned with children's emotional wellbeing to understand what affects young people's happiness from their point of view. This will provide a crucial step in early intervention of mental health problems and will support policy and practice in young people's wellbeing.

APPENDIX I: THE HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

Thank you for reading about my study on young people's happiness. This information is about the first phase of the study.

You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire, followed by some writing on happiness. All names will be anonymised and the questionnaire sheets will be stored securely at my university in a locked cupboard. Any data that is written up for my thesis or academic publication will remain anonymised. If you take part and then subsequently decide you wish to withdraw, you can contact me or my supervisor to ask to withdraw up until 1st September 2015, and your data will be removed from the study.

If you are happy to participate, please sign and date in the space below. Thank you for your time.

Yours faithfully,

Cordelia Sutton

Ph.D. Student, Childhood & Youth Studies

The Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET)

The Open University

Stuart Hall Building (Ground Floor)

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

I confirm that I am happy to participate in the study outlined above, and that I understand my right to withdraw.

Signed

Date

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS

Name: (Remember that your responses will be made anonymous):

Age:

School Year:

Gender:

What is your ethnic group?

Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

White

1. English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
2. Irish
3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
4. Any other White background, please describe

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups

5. White and Black Caribbean
6. White and Black African
7. White and Asian
8. Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe

Asian/Asian British

9. Indian
10. Pakistani
11. Bangladeshi
12. Chinese
13. Any other Asian background, please describe

Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British

14. African
15. Caribbean
16. Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe

Other ethnic group

17. Arab
18. Any other ethnic group, please describe

What is your religion? Please circle the appropriate description.

1. No religion
2. Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
3. Buddhist
4. Hindu
5. Jewish
6. Muslim
7. Sikh
8. Any other religion, please describe

Whom do you live with most of the time?

(For example, Mum/dad/step-parent/grandparents/carers)

What is the age and gender of any siblings you have?

What is the occupation of your parents or carer?

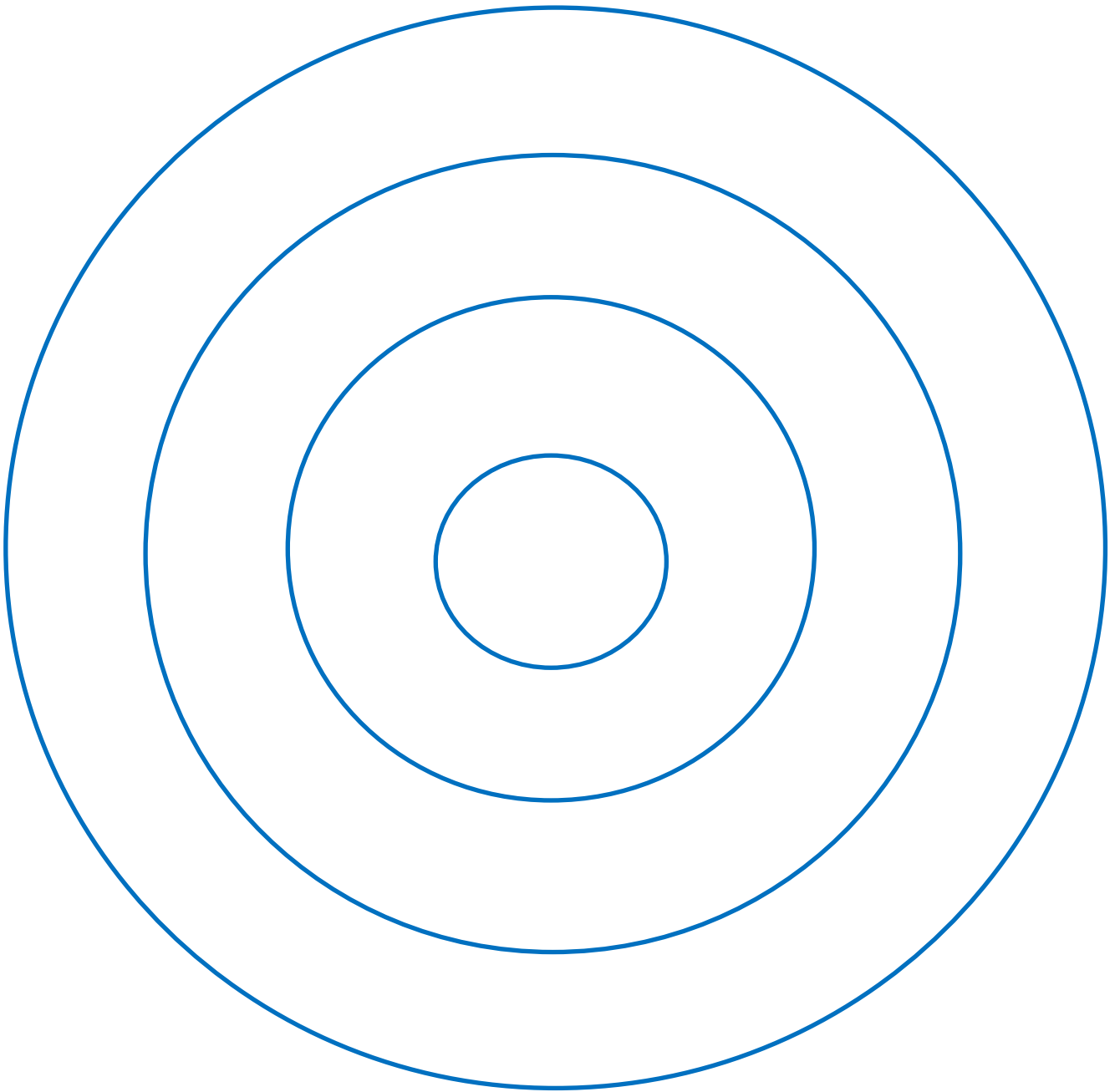
On this page, you are asked to write down anything that you associate with YOU being happy. You can include anything you want, and as much or as little as you like. When you think about what counts towards your happiness, what would it be?

You might like to think about people you know, your pets, things you like doing, things you have or would like to have, achievements, places you associate with being happy, or anything else.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down anything they associate with being happy.

On the next page, you are asked to create your own happiness map. You can use all the things you included on the previous page when you were writing about what makes you happy, or you can leave some out, or add new things if you prefer. Write your name in the centre of the map. Include the things that are MOST important to your happiness in the circles closest to you, and the things that are not quite as important to your happiness towards the outer circles.

My Happiness Map



Please describe your happiness map. How does it show what happiness means to you? Is there anything you want to say about any of the items that you have included?

Thank you very much for participating in this research. I am very grateful for your time.

If you would be interested in taking part in the next phase of this research project please indicate in the box below.

By ticking the box now, you are not under any obligation to participate in the future if you do not wish to.

Yours sincerely,

Cordelia Sutton

Yes, I would be interested in taking part in the next phase of the research project.

No, I would not be interested in taking part in the next phase of the research project.

APPENDIX II: ANALYTIC MEMO ON MUSIC AND HAPPINESS

Memo: Music and Happiness

What I am trying to do at the moment is to look in detail and the most things that appeared on the happiness maps, and the questions I asked about them in the focus groups, and then to see if they were further discussed in the individual interviews. I am interested in coding for what it is about them, their qualities, which makes them important to happiness. I have gone back to the questionnaires also, and have done pets, which was brief, and food (although I need to go and look at what is said about food on the questionnaires), and now I am looking at music.

I have coded all instances of music being mentioned on the happiness maps, which circle they appeared in, and direct discussion of music (if any) in participants' reflections on their happiness maps. I have then coded music discussions from the focus groups and from the individual interviews.

The vast majority of the time, participants are including music as something that they listen to. This is separate from playing a musical instrument, and often (though not always) separate from singing, or going to a concert. I have coded these all as music, though will distinguish the rare occasions when for participants, their comments about music refer to singing etc.

30 out of the 40 participants included music in their happiness questionnaires, and on their happiness maps. I also noticed that it was important for the group of 15 year old boys, who answered the questionnaires in a certain 'macho' way with their use of street language and the types of things they included. This group did not generally tend to include many of the relational things that others did. Of the 30 young people including music, 17 of these placed music in the circle closest to the centre, indicating that it was one of the things that was 'most' important to their happiness. All of the others except one (who placed it in the third circle away from the centre) placed music in the second circle, showing that it was still very important to their happiness.

Questionnaires:

The following quotes about music from the questionnaires were found within the third section: young people's reflections on their happiness maps. The number in brackets indicates the respondent's participant number. The writing in red denotes processes and actions of how respondents are describing how music is important to their happiness:

Quote	Processes and actions of happiness
"The bands I wrote down, their songs are sometimes similar to me" (004)	personally identifying with the songs of bands
"Shows that music helps me" (007)	feeling that music helps them
"The things that make me happiest are people and music and sport I guess this shows that my hobbies and interests make me very happy although so do people. Happiness is a good aspect of life and it keeps you emotionally stable I guess. Bands/band members/music makes me happy because the songs they make are meaningful and really good. Some band members make me happy as they are good	music being an interest; finding personal meaning in the songs of bands that they like; looking to band members as role models; liking being 'appreciated' as a fan by certain band members

people and appreciate their fans" (013)	
"In the next ring [circle 2] I put music because I like to listen to music a lot" (014)	enjoying listening to music
"Music- singing makes me happy and I would like to perform when I'm older but I have stage fright so it comes with a lot of stress as well" (030)	music as singing makes person happy, complex relationship as wanting to perform in the future but having stage fright
"Music- to stay relaxed" (033)	music as an aid to stay relaxed (personal state)
"Music is what I study" (034)	studying music
Music is under the list of 'What I love' (037)	loving music
<i>Next, any discussion on Music for each of the focus groups was coded in the same way.</i>	
<i>Year 10 Focus Group</i>	
<p>Interviewer: And lastly, what about music? ? Yeah, I play music when I'm like sad</p> <p>? I play it all the time, but I can't sing or dance or play an instrument. I just...yeah</p> <p>-? Yeah- that's like, at least like, I have the walk to school, walk home and that's like all music, and then I get home and it's like just everyone's singing, even, you know like, yeah</p> <p>Interviewer: So some people...where I put music so some people might have put...like particular groups, or bands, or singers, or band members....um, so what do you feel about music- how important is music?</p> <p>Sophie: Music is my life. [Others laughing a little] Sophie: Yeah. I've been singing since I was two.</p> <p>Interviewer: So music's something that you do...you do yourself? So what kind of...say a little bit more about how involved you are with singing or how important music is?</p> <p>Sophie: Erm. ...Well...I used to... do singing erm, classes, and it was with someone that worked on the X Factor and he helped me a lot, he, he built my confidence up and...now...music...if I hear music I'll literally just...</p>	<p>music is important as playing it when feeling down (helping them at an emotional time)</p> <p>being able to play music to listen to despite no own musical ability</p> <p>listening to music during the walk from home to school and vice versa; family singing at home</p> <p>Music being an identity, being what you do and who you are</p> <p>Taking music (singing) very seriously- finding confidence through singing lessons. Hearing music starts off a reaction (singing)</p>

<p>[others talking; conversation resumes with Sophie explaining why she has stopped singing lessons]</p> <p>Sophie: No, er, erm I stopped because...it was £100 for a 30 minute lesson and it was each week</p> <p>Sophie: So it's £400 a month and then because my dad and mum stopped working we had to...stop some things</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah. And how much of an opportunity do you get to like...sing in school or stuff?</p> <p>Sophie: Oh, I don't sing in school.</p> <p>Sophie: I do in PE cause I'm with my friends erm but, my confidence isn't <i>that</i> big like erm, if I was with my singing teacher, erm we did a concert and I sang in front of them people, but he was at the back of the room...and I felt really confident cause he was in there, so I knew that I wouldn't mess up. But, if he's not there, I'll mess up straight away.</p> <p>[Further on in Year 10 focus group]</p> <p>Rachel: I can't walk to school unless I've got music, I just find it so boring and I... if I don't have music to walk with, it will upset me, cause I get so bored, but if I have music to walk with, it'll make me more happy...you know, like kind of prepares me for a day at school</p>	<p>singing lessons becoming a very expensive thing to do</p> <p>having to stop singing lessons because of change in family financial circumstances</p> <p>Not singing in school. Like Norah's dancing lessons, there is a price to pay (cost) for these things that have become part of the identity of young people. It is something that has to be paid for privately, there is a financial investment in this identity.</p> <p>feeling confident in singing as a performance is totally reliant on her singing teacher being present</p> <p>Singing in PE because she is in the presence of her friends, (implied I can sing in front of them in PE because I am comfortable with them) and I enjoy it. (I am not comfortable singing in front of strangers)</p> <p>Listening to music whilst walking to school is helpful to the point of being necessary: alleviating boredom, increasing happiness, preparing for a day at school. Without music to listen to on the way to school this is gone and she feels upset</p>
<p>Year 11 Focus Group</p>	
<p>Daniel: Music is way to reach part of you that nothing else can...there's [laughing as others laugh] some aspect of...</p> <p>Jordan: [amidst laughter] Deep</p>	<p>music has a unique ability to evoke every emotion inside you; music is powerful and can make you feel lots of different things depending on the music</p>

<p>Daniel: Oh dear! There's some aspect of music which can make you cry, there's some aspects which can make you laugh...There's some that make you wanna dance...and music evokes <i>every</i> emotion inside you that nothing else can</p> <p>Lori: Sometimes it can, like, say things that you can't...like...understand you better, if that makes sense, do you know what I mean?...</p> <p>Lori... [Continues] Like sometimes some songs do it...like 'you get me, others don't, but this song kind of knows what I'm on about'</p> <p>Emily: Like relate to a song</p> <p>Jordan: I think music varies, cos there's so much just rubbish, just <i>terrible</i> music out there, like that's come out in the last year or so, and then you get like, you know, like I...I...personally do not like certain...genres of music but erm there's so many that are just so good and ..so...so I sort of love and hate music...because some of it's just amazing and I'm just like...you know, annoying my whole family by like playing on repeat for the next three days...and then the rest of it is like if my sister wants to listen to something...it's terrible</p> <p>Emily: Erm, I sort of am. But, um, music's like sport ...so, you kind of play it to achieve it. You don't play it to be rubbish, you play it to be good. ...And when you are good, it makes you feel happy.</p> <p>Daniel: Some music you don't just listen to as well, you <i>feel</i> physically, because some music can change your heart rate, and that you feel...in beat with the music and it <i>makes</i> you feel because some music makes you wanna dance and some music makes you just have all of the emotions, it's not about the <i>feeling</i>, it's about the <i>being</i>...music</p> <p>Holly: I think like it's human behaviour, kind of, to like music, because you know [laughs] ha, I dunno, like If I get sad, I just think of music. I think of music sometimes and I listen to it and it just makes me feel better by being <i>sad</i>...I don't know how that works, and if I listen to music</p>	<p>feeling understood by music, feeling that it says what you feel (identifying with music)</p> <p>music (certain songs) being able to understand you when other people are unable to</p> <p>identifying with a song</p> <p>Loving music (genres) that are amazing and good, enjoying listening to them over and over, playing the music that has discovered at home. Different genres as a point of difference between people (e.g. siblings)</p> <p>finding happiness in playing music only by being good at it; music is played (as an instrument) in order to achieve [a standard at it] when the desired standard is reached then you are happy</p> <p>music having a positive physical effect on you, experiencing physiological changes as well as emotional changes</p> <p>Liking music is part of human behaviour. Emotionally connecting to music, using music to experience emotions more fully: letting out sadness by listening to sad music; enhancing feelings of happiness by listening to happy music</p>
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<p>when I'm happy...happy songs...and it makes me happier</p> <p>Emily : I think with like every...I think most people don't really like to show how they feel on the inside and then when they hear something they can connect with, it's kind of like a way to release it. Like you can listen to something and it can be, so like if a song connects with you, then you can listen to it, and you can play it out loud, and it's a way of getting your emotions out without actually saying anything</p> <p>Jordan: And I think as well, music links in so...like music's got this, quite personal private type of thing, the kind of music you listen to...you, you'd share it with people you're close to, like people your family members, your friends, and I think, Th. The reason that at the ultimate level of bonding, you share music with each other that you know, mean...No, no-one knows I have the, the Taylor Swift album on my phone - no-one knows that!</p> <p>[Others laugh]</p> <p>? : They do now</p> <p>Jordan: But no, no-one knows that...they do now! So...it's a personal, private thing to have music, especially if it's in your phone, your computer and you just listen to it on your own</p> <p>Interviewer: So is that...? That's an interesting point about how you <i>are</i> listening to music- are you listening to it on your own, with headphones on, or are you listening to it, like...</p> <p>Isabelle: I feel like you have two different albums for that</p> <p>Lori: Yeah [half laugh]</p> <p>Isabelle: Like an album for yourself and an album for when your friends are round, you're playing out loud</p> <p>Jordan: Yeah, different play lists</p>	<p>using music as an emotional release because identifying (connecting) with music</p> <p>listening to music being a personal private thing, so sharing your music with someone that you choose to share it with is the "ultimate level of bonding"</p> <p>having a personal playlist that is just for you, and having a playlist that you share with others</p> <p>agreeing with the different playlists, personal and public (friends)</p>
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<p>[Daniel laughs]</p> <p>? : Yeah</p> <p>Mia: I don't really listen to music with <i>people</i>, I listen to it by myself as a way of escaping...</p> <p>? : Yeah</p> <p>Mia: ... [Continues] and that makes me happy</p> <p>Holly: I feel, like, kind of <i>embarrassed</i> when I play my music choice to other people in the fear that they'll be like 'Oh, what you listening to like...'</p> <p>Jordan: The Taylor Swift album</p> <p>Holly: Because I like...</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah</p> <p>Daniel: You feel nervous in case you...show someone music and they don't like it, and it's a song you really like, but another thing is, if you like big groups, say One Direction fans...they know...you <i>know</i> that you have <i>millions</i> of people who like the same music you do, so you're part of a community, so music doesn't just make you, like personally happy, it can create an entire community</p> <p>Interviewer: That you feel part of?</p> <p>Daniel: Yeah</p> <p>Jordan: I think as well, I love, um, when my friends are willing to share music with me, and I really like, like the music that they share with me, and it's my own time now, and I don't like sharing it with other people and I dunno...just like, like terrible...but I like being shared a song and being like "yeah OK, I'm gonna listen to this on repeat for three days now and annoy..."</p> <p>-? : I go to dance school where we like...tell stories, through dance but with like music...instead of...with stories</p> <p>Interviewer: OK- so you're using music in a different way?</p>	<p>not everyone listens to music with others, listening to music on her own as a means of escape, this makes her happy</p> <p>sharing music with others can engender feelings of embarrassment that they will judge you by what you listen to</p> <p>feeling nervous about sharing your music with someone who doesn't like it; feeling part of a community (and happy being part of that community) who like a very popular band</p> <p>loving being shared music with, a feeling of privilege that a friend is 'willing' to share their music choice; liking the music that has been shared- mixed feelings about sharing own music with others</p> <p>telling stories through dance and music in her dance school</p>
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<p>? : Yeah</p> <p>[Year 11 Focus Group: Discussion on the relationship between happiness and unhappiness]</p> <p>Daniel: Very much so. Because if you're unhappy- it's to do with friends- if you're unhappy and your friends notice you're unhappy, they <i>will</i> try and make you happy. And if you are unhappy, you will purposefully do things to make you happy. You will use coping methods; you will listen to music, play sports, eat food...</p> <p>? : Or except if you just wanna be sad, and you do things that do things just make you more sad [half laughs]</p> <p>? : Yeah!</p> <p>Daniel: Yeah</p> <p>? : Or listen to sad songs</p> <p>Daniel: There's that as well</p> <p>Isabelle: Happiness is a choice. Like you can choose...like...you can choose what mood you're in. Like, there are, you can, like you were saying with the music- you can choose what playlist you wanna listen to and whether that's gonna make you happy or sad</p>	<p>listening to music as one of the coping mechanisms we use when we feel sad</p> <p>choosing to listen to sad songs because they echo and reflect our mood</p> <p>we can choose emotions and moods that we want to evoke in ourselves by choosing particular playlists of music that will evoke those emotions</p>
<p><i>Finally, any discussion of music in the individual interviews was coded in the same way.</i></p>	
<p><i>From Daniel's Individual Interview</i></p>	
<p>Daniel: It's just little things like playing games with my friends...and...listening to music</p> <p>[very disruptive noises from other people in the staff room]</p>	<p>little things are part of my happiness, listening to music is one of the little things</p>
<p><i>From Jordan's individual interview</i></p>	
<p>Jordan: Spectating is great, because- especially when you're at the ground as well, cause everyone's singing, everyone's getting into the mood, you can just- you can be the person who</p>	<p>music (singing at football) is part of the atmosphere and being involved with your</p>

<p><i>starts</i> chants and stuff, which I <i>love</i> starting...I've got a very loud voice, so I love just bellowing something, and everyone else repeating it</p>	<p>fellow spectators (feeling part of a community) at a football match</p>
<p>Memo:</p> <p>I believe these codes will actually become focussed codes, as they are describing processes and actions that participants are describing about happiness in the data. What I have done to generate these new set of codes is to review my processes/action codes descriptions (in red), and generate these into codes (below). This means that all of these codes are all of the things that have come from what people are saying about music, but I have created codes that I think will potentially be applicable to other areas too. It will be useful to document at what time I create new codes, and why.</p>	
<p>Happiness codes from actions and processes described</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A little thing in life • Affected by finance • Helping others (including helping others through what is important to yourself as a child code [NVivo sub code]) • Sense of privilege from others actions • Helps me • Interest or enjoyment from activity • Has a personal meaning • Feeling appreciated • Makes me happy • Easy access to activity • Has a role in the day • Building confidence • Affected by finance • Being comfortable in a situation • Evoking emotion or facilitating emotional release • Feeling understood • Point of difference with others 	

- Related to ability
- Elicits physical change
- Essential to being human
- Personal and private thing
- Bonding with others
- Means of escape
- Feeling embarrassed or nervous
- Reflects mood
- Thinking of someone as a role model

APPENDIX III: ANALYSING INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES

Immediately after coding Daniel's interview today, I made the following notes:

Daniel uses partitioning/proportioning/quantifying/valuing/ many aspects of his life. Life, happiness, days, weeks and years could be projects, all with purposes. He lives by and needs orderliness, organisation and rules in his life; these inform his future education and career plans. He partitions happiness into helping others, and personal success. His chosen future careers are all prestigious professions, associated with helping others, dispensing advice, being rule bound. They are all very well-paid occupations, with implicit financial security. The financial security is both implicitly valued but also despised as a goal for Daniel, and he laughs awkwardly at the tensions that arise from this. Daniel is academically gifted, but wants others to value his hard work, and hints at insecurity at being thought of as someone who gets what he wants by (unfair?) natural ability alone. There is a theme that needs exploring within the other interviews too, of 'producing' or 'production' of happiness, both for himself and for/by others. It would be interesting to compare this with another theme of “falsifying happiness”, which is something that I already plan to explore from what I remember being explicitly stated in the focus groups. Daniel has always used games with others, with the focus on “fun” and “enjoyment”- as a child this was his main happiness, as he has got older, it has become something “to take the edge off”. It is managed differently- as a younger child it was football, but now he has moved away from his family friends with whom he used to play football, it is now playing online computer games with his friends. Daniel finds messiness, disorderliness both externally and internally the most difficult things for him. They are “nasty” and make him feel that he is “failing”. Disorderliness in his mind arises from his studies, when they are too hard, or overwhelming. He deals with both kinds of disorderliness and messiness (and family disagreements) by seeking “privacy”, his own space, and by a self-imposed withdrawal from others, which, like most things in his life, has a

bounded time frame- in this case a week. On a day-to-day basis, Daniel needs one day a week (Sundays) to regain order in his life, to stay on top of his homework etc.

APPENDIX IV: EXCERPT FROM FIELD NOTES

Field Notes: Monday 6th July

Arrived at the school in a rush as the bus from _ was late and I was cross with myself for not getting the earlier bus. I would rather be somewhere an hour early than cutting it fine.

Fortunately, the class was still empty and I was able to say hello to _ before the students came in.

It was _'s Year 10 Sociology class and I was introduced to _ , the Head of Psychology, as his Year 10 students who had received parental consent were to join us. The two classes together was obviously an unusual event for the students, and they were very noisy congregating in large groups around the tables. The back table of boys had too many pupils and more chairs had to be fetched.

There were two boys in the class who were noisy for most of the lesson- one eventually was told to leave and join a sporting activity, one was given “two C points” and a further boy was given “one C point” for disruptive behaviour.

_ introduced me as “Cordelia” and I spoke to the class (now around 30 pupils) and advised them of this being the first phase of my study. I explained the right to withdraw and that they should contact their teachers if they decided that they wanted to withdraw before September. I think this alarmed _ , who said that this was being explained as part of ethical considerations which they had encountered in research methods and that she thought it was unlikely that they would want to withdraw. I said a further ethical consideration was anonymity and I assured them that any data entered would be made anonymous. I explained the questionnaire to them, indicating where to sign on the front, that the first section was a general

questionnaire, and then I explained that they were being asked to think about what happiness meant for them personally. There were no right or wrong answers but this was the point of my study- to understand happiness from young people's own point of view and not just via completion of rating scales. I explained how the happiness map worked- write their name in the middle and then the things that were most important to their happiness to be closest to the centre, and things that still counted as happiness but were not quite as important to be in the outer circles.

Q: Can we write more than one thing in each circle?

A: Yes, you can write as much or as little as you want.

On the back was a space for them to write about what their happiness map showed: how does it represent what happiness means for them. They could write in more detail about particular things on their map if they needed to.

Lastly, I explained that there were boxes to tick if they wanted to take part in the next phase of the study, which would be in October. They would be under no obligation to do so if they changed their minds.

By the time it was all explained and the questionnaires distributed it was between 5 and 10 past 10.

Questions around the room were for whether they should circle an individual thing e.g. ethnicity "White British" or "English" etc. and the same for religious denomination. I said they could do either. One girl asked me "My friend is gender fluid. What should she write under gender?" So I said that it was self-designated (It was blank so they could write what they wished).

There was some discussion and general giggling but once they settled down (after two boys were moved) the students generally worked well and concentrated with a few exceptions.

_ was asked about the perception of SES question “Does this mean am I rich or am I poor?” and I was asked what it meant by another girl. I explained that when she thought about her own life and family, sis she think that they had around the same money and possessions as people she knew, or more or less.

After a while, two Muslim girls left the room quietly taking their questionnaires with them. I asked _ what had happened, and she said that she had thought they were uncomfortable about the wealth perception question. She then said that when she had shown the questionnaires to her colleagues in the staff room, that they had thought that the question would be difficult/problematic for some. I felt terrible, and as though I had committed a real cultural faux pas. I absolutely wanted to be as inclusive as I could, and I did not want to upset anyone.

(continues...) Later, I asked _ if I could talk to the two Muslim girls, and she fetched them from the other classroom. They wanted to speak in quiet in the corridor, and not in the classroom. They were quiet and friendly but said that the question had made them uncomfortable. I apologised and said that it was definitely not what I wanted to do, and that I had included the question because research with young people had indicated that perceiving others to be much better off or worse off than yourself was associated with being less happy. I thanked them for their feedback and said that I would think further about this question.

_ indicated to me that any question on SES, for instance family income or free school meals would probably be problematic for the same reasons.

APPENDIX V: SELF-REFLEXIVITY IN DATA COLLECTION: RECALLING MY OWN EMOTIONS

In being present at the uncomfortable Year 10 focus group exchange on friendships, my own experiences of teenage unhappiness and conflicting emotions aroused by friends re-surfaced. The notion that not all friends are good friends became relevant for me particularly around the age of 14-15. I began to realise at this time that some of my friends were not my good friends; that they were not good *for* me, and that I struggled to like some of the people that had been my friends, because they were now being mean and rejecting me. It made me feel sick and depressed, never knowing where I stood with people, or what the terms of these relationships were. I think that negotiating this time is complicated, and can become very difficult and lead to unhappiness for people. By the age of 16/17, I think that happiness may increase partly because you are more confident in who your friends are. These personal thoughts seemed to be reflected in my study. In their awareness of the different types of friends, and the assurance of reciprocal trust and support in close friendships that was spoken about by the young people in Year 11, their age and maturity mattered. Being happier to be part of a smaller group of like-minded people that you care about and who genuinely care about you, rather than being part of a more diverse, sometimes wider social group of friends. In being mindful of my own experiences when analysing the data from my study, I am aware of the importance of reflexivity: the effect of my own emotions and subjective experiences in how I interpret the data. It also resonates with what Bowlby (1979, p. 153) discusses when he talks about the role of the therapist and how the therapist conveys his own thoughts and feelings to the patient largely through non-verbal communication. The therapist's own values and opinions influence their attitude and identification with their patient.

The importance of being aware of one's reactions to what one is observing is also highlighted by the psychoanalyst and psycho-social researcher Erikson, in his book *Childhood and Society* (1963). Erikson warns of the dangers of reinforcing vague meanings with vague

explanations. This is something that I have worked hard to avoid in the constructivist grounded theory approach that I have adopted in analysing the important themes emerging from the data that young people have given voice to regarding their happiness. As a researcher, I am not a therapist, but as someone who listens to and aims to encourage young people to discuss their own thoughts, feelings and ways of understanding the world. I know that some things will resonate with me through both my own personal experiences, and how I have come to subsequently interpret and internalise these. I need to reflect that some things I recognise and will convey this recognition to young people who are talking with me, and may subconsciously direct not only the content of what they disclose, but also the manner in which they disclose it.

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